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DISCOURSES

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

By the late REVEREND

JOHN LELAND, D.D.

THE THIRD VOLUME.

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On

On the Delight a good Man has in the Contemplation of God and his glorious Perfections.

DISCOURSE I.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the Desires of thine Heart.

OF all the Prejudices that are apt to render Men averse to Religion, there is none more common, or which hath a more pernicious Influence than this, that they look upon it as an Enemy to the Pleasure and Satisfaction of human Life. They represent it to themselves a gloomy and melancholy Thing,

ſour and unſociable, in which no Pleaſure or Enjoyment is to be found, nothing that can yield an agreeable Entertainment in this preſent State. Whilſt Perſons are under the Power of ſuch Prejudices, the Arguments and Motives of Religion are in a great Meaſure loſt upon them. When they form ſuch a diſagreeable and unamiable Idea of a religious and virtuous Life, as if it were inconſiſtent with their preſent Happineſs, ſcarce will the Promiſe of Heaven itſelf allure them to it; eſpecially when it is regarded as a State of conſummate Holineſs and Purity.

It is therefore of great Importance to endeavour to get our Minds diveſted of theſe Prejudices againſt Religion, and brought to a high Eſtimation of it, and Delight in it; and to this Purpoſe we ſhould endeavour to fix our Views upon its Excellency and Lovelineſs, to repreſent it to our Minds in an agreeable and amiable which is its true and proper Light, and to behold it in its own lovely Form, and in the beautiful Harmony of all its Parts, all conſpiring to entertain the nobleſt Affections of the human Mind. We ſhould purſue theſe Reflections till we come to this, as our deliberate fixed Perſuaſion, that Religion duly known and practiſed hath a Tendency to promote

the true Happineſs of our Nature; that it is not inconſiſtent with any Pleaſures which are not reaſonable and innocent, and is a Source of the pureſt and moſt laſting Joys.

I am ſenſible indeed that, let Religion be ſuppoſed never ſo excellent and amiable in itſelf, it cannot make a Perſon happy, except there be a Suitableneſs to it in the Temper of his Mind. They who are under the Power of vicious Affections and Luſts, and whoſe moral Taſte is corrupted and depraved, can take no Pleaſure in the Ways of Religion, nor have a juſt Reliſh for its pure and refined Joys till the Diſpoſitions of their Hearts be changed. But we muſt not imagine, that therefore it is to no Purpoſe to ſet before them the Reaſonableneſs, the Beauty and Excellency of true Religion and Virtue. Still they are to be treated and applied to as reaſonable thinking Beings, who have a Power, if they will exerciſe it, to turn their Thoughts and Views to the moſt excellent Objects. It cannot be denied, that attentive Conſideration and Reflection, and the repreſenting Things in a proper Light, may have a Tendency to remove Prejudices, to rectify and improve the moral Taſte, and by Degrees to work upon the Heart and the Affections. And, particularly in the Caſe before us, the beſt Way we can take to give

a right Biaſs to the Affections and Diſpoſitions of the Soul is to endeavour to get our Minds enlightened to a juſt Diſcernment of the moral Differences of Things, the Evil and Deformity and the pernicious Conſequences of Vice and Sin, and the great Worth, the Beauty and Excellency of religious Virtue and real Holineſs, the glorious Rewards which ſhall attend it, and the Divine Joys it hath a Tendency to produce. By ſuch Views frequently repeated it may be hoped that the Reaſon will be convinced, a right practical Judgment formed, and the Will and Affections drawn to make a proper Choice: For the Views of an amiable Object have an aſſimilating tranſforming Virtue, and Beauty frequently beheld tends to excite Love and engage the Heart.

This is the Method which Reaſon preſcribes, and the Holy Scripture directs to, in order to bring us to a right Temper of Mind, to purify our Hearts and raiſe our Affections to the nobleſt Objects. But ſuch is our preſent Weakneſs and Depravity, ſuch the Power of our corrupt Appetites and Paſſions, and the manifold Temptations to which we are expoſed, that we ſtand in Need of Divine Influences and Aids for accompliſhing this great Work. And

therefore

therefore it highly concerneth us to offer up our earneſt Prayers to God through *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hands, and can touch the moſt ſecret Springs of our Souls, would communicate to us the Aids of his Holy Spirit, that the great Truths and Duties of Religion may come with a Divine Light and Power on our Minds, and that our Hearts may be brought to a juſt ſpiritual Taſte and Reliſh of thoſe pure Pleaſures which the right Knowledge and Practice of Religion is fitted to afford. The giving us new Hearts and new Spirits is repreſented as his Work. Remarkable to this Purpoſe is the Promiſe he makes to his People, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 26. *A new Heart will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the ſtony Heart out of your Fleſh.* And he afterwards declares, Ver. 37. that *for this he would be inquired of to do it for them.* But this is not deſigned to preclude the Uſe of their own Endeavours. For he, who promiſes to give them new Hearts and new Spirits, elſewhere exhorts them to make to themſelves new Hearts and new Spirits: *Caſt away from you all your Tranſgreſſions, and make you a new Heart and a new Spirit.* Ezek. xviii. 31. This is deſigned to intimate to us that we muſt uſe all proper Means

on our Parts, and apply our utmoſt Efforts to rectify what is amiſs in the Temper of our Minds, as ever we would hope for his gracious Aſſiſtances and Divine Communications. And certainly, as has been already hinted, one of the propereſt Means for this Purpoſe is the ſtirring up the Powers of our Souls to an attentive Conſideration of thoſe Things which have a Tendency to remove and overcome our Prejudices againſt Religion, and recommend it to our Affection and Eſteem.

As an Introduction to what I intend pretty largely to inſiſt upon in Proſecution of this important Subject, I have choſen theſe remarkable Words of the pious Pſalmiſt: *Delight thyſelf in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the Deſires of thine Heart.* He begins this Pſalm with cautioning Men not to give Way to the Frettings of Envy and Diſcontent, becauſe of the ſeeming Proſperity of the Wicked, who often flouriſh in an Abundance of Riches, Honours, and Pleaſures of this preſent World, whilſt good Men, *the excellent of the Earth*, are in a poor mean Condition, afflicted and deſpiſed. *Fret not thyſelf becauſe of Evil-Doers, neither be envious againſt the Workers of Iniquity.* He obſerves that their Proſperity is *a vain Shew*, and at beſt very tranſitory in its Duration: *They*

They ſhall ſoon be cut down as the Graſs, and wither as the green Herb. Men of real Piety and Virtue, who place their Truſt in their God, and go on in a Courſe of Well-doing, may not have a large Affluence of this World's Goods, but they ſhall have what is neceſſary for their Support, and the Favour and Bleſſing of God with it, which ſweetens every thing, and is a better Security for their Subſiſtence, than any worldly Wealth or Power can furniſh: *Truſt in the Lord, and do Good; ſo ſhalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.* And then the Pſalmiſt adds, *Delight thyſelf alſo in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the Deſires of thine Heart.* Whilſt others ſeek for Pleaſure in the Vanities of this tranſitory World, do thou place thy higheſt Happineſs in God alone, make him the chief Object of thy Joy, and ſo ſhalt thou never be diſappointed. He ſhall give thee what is really beſt for thee, and through his Grace and Goodneſs thou ſhalt attain to that true Happineſs which is able to ſatisfy the moſt enlarged Deſires and Capacities of thy Soul.

This Precept of *delighting in the Lord* is not to be underſtood in ſo ſtrict a Senſe, as if he were to be the only Object of our Joy, and we were not allowed to delight or take

Pleaſure in any Thing elſe. It is evident to any one that conſiders the human Frame, that Man is capable of taking in a Variety of Joys, ſuited to the various Powers and Affections of his Nature; Pleaſures flow in upon us at our Eyes, our Ears, our Taſte, and all the Senſes; and the Author of our Beings has ſtored the World about with a Variety of Things admirably fitted to excite in us the moſt agreeable Senſations. The Pleaſures of the Imagination are ſtill of a larger Extent, and of a more exquiſite Kind. And ſuperior to theſe are the Pleaſures ariſing from the Purſuits and Acquiſitions of Knowledge, and the Improvement of our rational intellectual Powers, and from the Exerciſe of the kind and ſocial Affections, ſo natural to the human Heart, when it is not greatly perverted and depraved. Religion is not intended to deprive us of any of theſe Pleaſures. On the contrary it tends in many Inſtances to heighten and improve them. It teaches us to conſider them all in a Subordination to the Delight we ſhould have in God the chief Good. This muſt be the ſupreme ruling Affection in our Souls, and all other Joys and Pleaſures muſt be governed and regulated by it, and muſt be kept in their proper Place and Order, and this will give them their nobleſt Reliſh.

The

The inferior Animals of the brutal Order are manifeſtly deſigned for no higher Enjoyments than thoſe of the ſenſitive Life. When they attain to theſe, they attain to the true Happineſs of their Nature, an Happineſs adequate to the ſeveral Powers, Inſtincts, and Capacities with which they are endued. Religion and a Regard to the Deity does not enter into their Gratifications and Joys. They receive many Benefits from the bountiful Hand of Divine Providence, but without being ſenſible of their Obligations to the Sovereign Benefactor, to whom they owe their Exiſtence, and from whom all their Bleſſings and Enjoyments flow. This is not to be charged upon them as a Fault: They have not Faculties capable of riſing above the Objects of Senſe to the Fountain of all Perfection and Excellence. But Man is a Creature of an higher Order, and deſigned for nobler Joys. He is capable of knowing and contemplating God himſelf, of loving, adoring, obeying and enjoying him, of thankfully acknowledging him as the glorious Author of all the Bleſſings he enjoys, and of raiſing his Affections and Views above them to him the ſupreme, the infinite Good. This therefore is juſtly required of him as his Duty. He is not to place his chief Felicity in any inferior

Good; the Deſires of his Soul muſt be ſupremely fixed upon God, and in him muſt ultimately center and terminate. Then it is that he acteth up to the proper End of his Being, and in a Manner worthy of the excellent and ſublime Faculties which God hath given him.

Man was at firſt created in an innocent and happy State, and this lower World was really prepared for his Entertainment. As it was then in its original Beauty, and was come fair and lovely out of the Creator's Hand, it could not but produce the moſt pleaſing Senſations. And it was no Doubt agreeable to the Will of God, that Man ſhould take Pleaſure in that Variety of delightful Objects, which the Divine Goodneſs hath provided. Eſpecially ſince *Paradiſe* was in a particular Manner aſſigned him for his bliſsful Seat, where he was placed amidſt a Profuſion of Joys. But certainly God never deſigned that he ſhould take up with theſe Things as his proper Portion and Felicity, but that he ſhould lift up his Soul above them to the ſupreme original Goodneſs and Beauty, and in him place his chief Delight and Happineſs. And therefore, though he had an ample Liberty given him to entertain himſelf with the delicious Fruits of *Paradiſe*, yet it ſeemed fit

to

to the Divine Wiſdom to lay a Reſtraint upon him with Reſpect to one, to make him ſenſible that he was under the Dominion of a higher Lord, on whom he had a conſtant Dependence, and to whom he owed his all; that he was not to ſeek or place his Happineſs in an unlimited Indulgence to his own Inclinations and Appetites, but in an unreſerved Obedience to God, and Conformity to his Will, and in a Senſe of his Love and Favour, and that the Pleaſure he took in other Things was to be all in Subordination to him the chief Good.

If Man had perſiſted in his Obedience and Innocence, he would have enjoyed all the Happineſs for which his Nature was originally formed and deſigned. He would have rejoiced in God and in his glorious Perfections, and in him would have found an Object capable of filling and ſatisfying the vaſt Deſires of his Soul. This would have both purified and heightened the Pleaſure he took in inferior Objects and Enjoyments, and all the delectable Things in the Creatures around him would have been as ſo many Steps by which to aſcend, in Love, Gratitude, and Admiration, to the ſupreme and abſolutely perfect Being. But, ſeduced by the deceitful Inſinuations of the Tempter, he broke from his regular Subordination to

his

his Sovereign Lord and Benefactor, and, ſetting up his own Will and Appetites to be his Rule, and indulging too great a Love to inferior ſenſible Good, he fell from God and Happineſs. And ever ſince have the Sons of Men been prone to ſeek for Happineſs in the Goods of this preſent World, and in the Gratification of their own irregular Appetites and Paſſions, in a Preference to the Will and Law of God. And the main Deſign of all the Diſcoveries and Revelations he hath made to Mankind hath been to recover them to a right Senſe and Purſuit of true Happineſs, to draw off their Hearts and Affections from a too cloſe Attachment to inferior Good, and from thoſe mean and vicious Pleaſures which are unworthy of the rational Nature, and to engage them to ſeek for Happineſs in an Imitation of his moſt amiable moral Perfections, in Obedience to his Laws, and in the Enjoyment of his Love and Favour. This eſpecially is the great End of the Goſpel Revelation. For this Purpoſe God ſent his Son into the World, the unſpotted Image of his own Goodneſs and Purity, by whom he hath made the moſt attractive Diſcoveries and Diſplays of his own Glory and Lovelineſs, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace to allure and draw us to his Service,

and

and engage us to come to him for Happineſs. And for our greater Encouragement he hath been graciouſly pleaſed to ſet before us a State of everlaſting Felicity in the heavenly World, conſiſting in the immediate Viſion and Fruition of himſelf, and in a complete Conformity to him. And it is his Will that by our *delighting ourſelves in him* here on Earth we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds prepared for the Joys of his beatific Preſence.

This Duty of *delighting in God* is of a noble Extent, and comprehends a great Deal in it.

To *delight in God* is to delight ourſelves in the Fulneſs of his infinite Perfection, and in all thoſe glorious and amiable Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the higheſt Admiration and Eſteem of reaſonable Beings.

It is to delight in his Works of Creation and Providence, as exhibiting the Diſplays of his Glory; and in the admirable Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jeſus Chriſt*.

It is to delight in his holy and moſt excellent Laws, and in the Practice of the various Duties which he requireth of us, and which are really conducive to the true Perfection and Felicity of our Natures.

And,

And, finally, it is to rejoice in the Hope which he hath ſet before us, the Hope of that eternal Life which is the Gift of God in *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, to all thoſe that love and ſerve him with Sincerity.

Now it is evident that theſe Things take in the Whole of Religion and of a holy and virtuous Life. From this View of them it appears that all the Pleaſures of Religion may be comprehended in *delighting in God*. This is the central Point to which they all tend, and in which they all unite. And I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that in each of theſe Reſpects, the Knowledge and Practice of Religion is a Source of true and ſolid Satisfaction and Joy to a well-diſpoſed Mind; and that therefore there is no juſt Ground for the Prejudices many are apt to entertain againſt a Life of real Piety and Virtue.

The firſt Thing to be conſidered, and which moſt directly and properly cometh under the Notion of *delighting in God*, is that we ſhould delight in the Fulneſs of his infinite Perfection, and in all thoſe amiable and glorious Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the higheſt Love, Admiration, and Eſteem of reaſonable Beings.

That God is abſolutely perfect is the Voice of Reaſon and Nature as well as Scripture.

ture. All other Beings owe their Exiſtence, and whatever Powers or Excellencies they are poſſeſſed of, to an higher Cauſe, and therefore muſt be dependent and limited. But God deriveth not his Being or Perfections from any other, but hath the Source of his Perfection and Bleſſedneſs eternally and independently in himſelf, and therefore hath nothing to limit him from without or from within. To him alone belongs that adorable Character, *I am that I am*. Of all other Beings it muſt be ſaid, that ſome have one Perfection and ſome another, and that they differ in their Degrees of Excellence; but God alone hath all Perfections in the higheſt poſſible Degree of Eminency, and in the moſt amiable and perfect Harmony. If therefore we are pleaſed and delighted with the ſcattered Rays of Goodneſs and Beauty which we behold in Creatures like ourſelves, what a ſublime Pleaſure muſt it yield to contemplate the ſupreme, original unbounded Excellence, in whom there is a Fulneſs of Perfection never to be exhauſted? and then to conſider him as ready to communicate of his All-ſufficiency to us to make us happy! Such is the Pleaſure that Religion opens to us! To this glorious Object it teacheth us to raiſe our Views. Admiration, when fixed on an excellent Object,

ject, naturally elevateth and tranſporteth us, and is the moſt delightful of all our Paſſions. And it heighteneth this Delight, when it is an Object in which we ourſelves have a particular Intereſt and Concern. And what is there ſo worthy of our Admiration, as the ſelf-exiſtent, the all-perfect *Jehovah*, who is from Everlaſting to Everlaſting infinitely happy in himſelf, and who of his free Grace and Goodneſs offers himſelf to us to be our eternal Felicity! Here all our Faculties are ſwallowed up in a devout Aſtoniſhment. Let other Things be never ſo great and glorious, ſtill they are but finite. It is poſſible at length to come to an End of their Perfection, to find out all that is in them of Goodneſs and Excellence. But in God there is enough to entertain and ſatisfy the Soul to Eternity, new Beauties and Excellencies ſtill riſing to it's View, and furniſhing it with perpetual Matter for Wonder, Love, and Joy. After we have raiſed our Conceptions to the higheſt, ſtill there is infinitely more that we do not know. Though our Faculties ſhall be for ever enlarging, we ſhall never be able fully to comprehend his Glory. Here therefore we may ſafely indulge our Joys, and give full Scope to our nobleſt Affections.

But

But beſide this general View of God, as the abſolutely perfect Being, it may be uſeful more diſtinctly to conſider ſome of the principal of the Divine Attributes and Perfections known to us, whereby it will appear what a proper Object he is not only of our profoundeſt Reverence, but of our higheſt Love, Admiration, and Delight.

On the Delight a good Man has in the Contemplation of God and his glorious Perfections.

DISCOURSE II.

PSALM XXXVII. 4.

Delight thyſelf in the Lord, and he ſhall give thee the Deſires of thine Heart.

IF ever any Duty might be ſaid to be it's own Reward, it is that to which we are here exhorted, *Delight thyſelf in the Lord.* To command us to do ſo is to command us to conſult our own trueſt Happineſs, and to direct us in the propereſt Way of obtaining it.

In our former Diſcourſe on this Subject we conſidered the Delight which ariſeth to a good and religious Mind from the Belief and Contemplation of God as the abſolutely perfect Being, who hath an unlimited Fulneſs of Perfection in himſelf: And it was ſhewn, that this general View of the Deity tendeth to fill the Heart of a good Man with a divine Joy. Let us now proceed to a more diſtinct Conſideration of thoſe Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the higheſt Love, Admiration, and Delight of reaſonable Beings.

And one of the firſt Divine Attributes which obviouſly preſenteth itſelf to the Mind is almighty Power. This vaſt and ſtupendous Fabric of the Univerſe, which he at firſt created, and which he continually ſuſtaineth and upholdeth, is the glorious Monument of his Omnipotency: *For the inviſible Things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the Things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Rom. i. 20. Hence that noble Addreſs of the Prophet, *Jer.* xxxii. 17. *Behold, thou haſt made the Heaven and the Earth by thy great Power and outſtretched Arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee.* What can be too hard

hard for him who created the World? *Once hath God ſpoken* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *twice have I heard this, that Power belongeth unto God.* Pſ. lxii. 11. To him it belongeth originally, eſſentially, and independently. In the moſt excellent and powerful of created Beings there is ſtill ſome Mixture of Weakneſs. There are ſome Things which tranſcend the utmoſt Exertion of their Force. But in God and in him alone it is truly and abſolutely infinite, and which extends to whatſoever is the proper Object of Power, without any Bounds or Limits. If all the Power and Strength of Angels and Men were collected into one, what a mighty Power would this be! and yet as it is all derived from God, and dependent upon him; ſo, if ſet in Oppoſition to him, or compared with the Fulneſs of Power which is in him, it would deſerve no other Name than that of Weakneſs and Impotency. And this almighty Power of God, as it naturally tendeth to ſtrike the Mind with a religious Fear and Reverence, ſo it filleth the Heart of a good Man with ineffable Satisfaction and Joy. How delightful is it to conſider unlimited Power ever employed for the moſt excellent Purpoſes in maintaining and preſerving the good Order of the Univerſe, and

particularly in protecting and defending thoſe that ſincerely love him and put their Truſt in him, and in promoting their real Happineſs? *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole Earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in Behalf of thoſe whoſe Heart is perfect* (or *upright*) *towards him.* 2 Chron. xvi. 9. The Righteous are often expoſed to the Rage of great and powerful Adverſaries, but in this they rejoice that their Help is in the Name of the omnipotent God who made Heaven and Earth. Hence the devout Pſalmiſt cannot forbear exulting and teſtifying the Joy and Confidence of his Soul in the Power of God, even amidſt the greateſt Dangers: *The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom ſhall I fear? The Lord is the Strength of my Life, of whom ſhall I be afraid? Though an Hoſt ſhould incamp againſt me, my Heart ſhall not be afraid; though War ſhould ariſe againſt me, in this will I be confident.* Pſ. xxvii. 1, 3. We are told, *that the Lord giveth Power unto the Feeble, and to them that have no Might he increaſeth Strength.* Iſa. xl. 29. *Zion, i. e.* the Church, *ſhall rejoice, becauſe the Lord God in the Midſt of her is mighty.* Zeph. iii. 17. Hence that noble Exhortation, *Truſt ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord* Jehovah *is everlaſting Strength,*

Strength. Iſa. xxvi. 4. His Power exceedeth all that the moſt unbounded Imagination is capable of conceiving. He is *able to do exceeding abundantly for us, above all that we aſk or think, according to the Power that worketh in us: Therefore ſhall Glory be aſcribed to him in the Church by* Chriſt Jeſus *throughout all Ages, World without End.* Eph. iii. 20, 21.

Secondly, God is a Being, not only of almighty Power, but of infinite Wiſdom. And indeed Power without Wiſdom is a blind unguided Force, more proper to inſpire Terror than Eſteem. But with God *is Wiſdom and Strengh, he hath Counſel and Underſtanding.* Job. xii. 13. He is deſcribed in Scripture as *the only wiſe God,* as if none could be properly called wiſe but God only. *To be wiſe as an Angel of God,* is ſometimes uſed as a proverbial Expreſſion to ſignify an eminent Degree of Wiſdom. But all this Wiſdom is wholly derived from God, and, however great in itſelf, is ſo ſmall and inconſiderable, compared with his, that he is ſaid to *charge his Angels with Folly.* Job. iv. 18. Of him alone it can be ſaid, that *his Underſtanding is infinite.* Pſ. cxlvii. 5. He taketh in the whole Compaſs of Things, paſt, preſent, and to come, at one intire all-comprehending View, and

hath a moſt perfect Diſcernment of all their poſſible Connections and Relations, and therefore muſt needs know in every Circumſtance what is beſt and fitteſt to be done. Juſtly therefore is he repreſented as *wonderful in Counſel, and excellent in Working*. Iſ. xxviii. 29. Knowledge and Wiſdom, eſpecially where it is in the higheſt poſſible Degree, naturally commandeth our Admiration and Eſteem; and, when we conſider it as ordering all Things for the univerſal Good, and even for our Happineſs, it muſt needs produce in us a divine Joy and Gladneſs of Heart. We are ignorant ſhort-ſighted Creatures, liable to Errors and Miſtakes, and often at a Loſs what Courſe to take amidſt the Difficulties and Perplexities which ſurround us. What a Comfort therefore muſt it be to raiſe our Views to the moſt wiſe Governor of the World, and Diſpoſer of all Events! Bad Men may lay their Deſigns with great Subtlety as well as Malice, but *there is no Wiſdom nor Underſtanding, nor Counſel againſt the Lord*. Prov. xxi. 30. *He diſappointeth the Devices of the Crafty, ſo that their Hands cannot perform their Enterpriſe. He taketh the Wiſe in their own Craftineſs, and the Counſel of the Froward is carried headlong*. Job v. 12, 13. It is a raviſhing Thought to a good

a good Mind, that, even when Things have the moſt diſaſtrous Aſpect, ſtill infinite Wiſdom is at the Helm, and preſideth over all Events, even thoſe that ſeem to be moſt contingent; and that God knoweth how to cauſe Good to ariſe out of Evil, and Order out of Confuſion, and to bring about his own excellent Deſigns by Methods far tranſcending all human Comprehenſion. Safely therefore, and with a divine Complacency, may *the Righteous caſt their Cares and Burdens upon the Lord*, both with Regard to Concernments of a public and of a private Nature; and can look up to him to *direct their Paths*, even in the moſt perplexing Circumſtances, from a Perſuaſion that he will order all Things for them in the wiſeſt and fitteſt Manner.

Thirdly, It is the Goodneſs of God which eſpecially tendeth to fill the Heart of a Man of true Piety and Virtue with a ſincere and ſolid Joy. What can poſſibly be more delightful than to contemplate infinite Wiſdom and almighty Power as in a perfect Conjunction with the moſt diffuſive Goodneſs and Benignity! To behold the ſupreme Lord and Father of all ever promoting the Good of the Whole, and the Happineſs of each Individual as far as is conſiſtent with it, ſending forth his beneficial Influences,

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as the Sun doth it's invigorating refreſhing Rays, and a Fountain it's Streams; but not merely by a natural Neceſſity, but from a moſt wiſe, free, and generous Benevolence!

The glorious Angels, as they are endued with the moſt enlarged Capacities, do moſt abundantly partake of thoſe Communications of the Divine Goodneſs, which fill thoſe bliſsful Realms above with inexpreſſible Light and Joy. But God's Goodneſs is not confined to them. Every Part of the Univerſe which comes within our Notice exhibiteth the amiable Diſplays of the Divine Benignity: *The Lord is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all his Works.* Pſ. cxlv. 9. He provideth even for the brute Creation, who are therefore beautifully repreſented by the Pſalmiſt as *looking with waiting Eyes* towards him the common Parent of the Univerſe, and receiving their Food from his liberal Hand, Pſ. civ. 27, 28, 29. But it is eſpecially delightful to contemplate his Goodneſs as manifeſting itſelf towards the Children of Men. He hath made us a noble Order of Beings, endued with noble Faculties, and capable of various Joys, ſenſitive, moral, and intellectual. He placed Man at his firſt Creation amidſt the pure Delights of *Paradiſe,*

Paradiſe, and gave him many Tokens of his Favour, while he continued in his State of Innocence. And though it may juſtly be ſuppoſed, that, in the preſent ſinful State of Mankind, many Things are ordered for our Correction and Puniſhment, and as Tokens of the Divine Diſpleaſure againſt us for our Sins; yet ſtill there are numberleſs Bleſſings poured forth by his benign Providence upon the degenerate human Race, notwithſtanding their manifold Offences and Provocations: *He giveth us Rain from Heaven and fruitful Seaſons, and filleth our Hearts with Food and Gladneſs.* Acts xiv. 17. *The Earth is full of the Goodneſs of the Lord.* Pſ. xxxiii. 5. It is repleniſhed with a great Abundance of Things for the Uſe and Delight of Mankind. Out of it's Boſom are produced various Kinds of Herbage and Grain, Trees, Fruits, and Flowers of manifold Uſe and exquiſite Beauty. It's Bowels are ſtored with hidden Treaſures, and it's Surface is diverſified in ſuch a Manner, as to yield the moſt agreeable and entertaining Proſpects. The Animals upon it in their ſeveral beautiful Forms, and wonderful Powers and Inſtincts, are not only furniſhed with whatever is neceſſary for their own ſenſitive Life, but are deſigned to miniſter in various

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Ways to our Neceſſities and to our Pleaſure. The Mercies we daily receive from God, and the Proviſion that is made for the Suſtenance and Accommodation of this preſent Life, ſhould excite grateful Affections in our Hearts towards our ſovereign Benefactor: But above all what Joy muſt it yield to take a View of the infinite Grace and Goodneſs of God in the marvellous Methods made Uſe of for recovering us from our ruinous and lapſed State to Holineſs and Happineſs? Nothing can poſſibly exhibit a more affecting Proof of the wonderful Love of God to Mankind, than his ſending his only begotten Son into the World, to inſtruct us by his heavenly Doctrine, to lead us by his moſt perfect and lovely Example, and by his Sufferings and Sacrifice *to obtain eternal Redemption for us.* How delightful, how tranſporting, is it to conſider God as *a God in* Chriſt *reconciling the World unto himſelf?* To behold that moſt glorious Being, according to the amiable Repreſentation that is made of him in the ſacred Writings, inviting Sinners to forſake the Paths of Vice and Deſtruction, and to return to him their rightful Lord and ſupreme Good; offering to enter into a gracious Covenant with them through *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to pardon all their

their Iniquities upon their ſincere Repentance; urging and engaging them by all the Charms of Love, by a Regard to their own trueſt Intereſt, by every Conſideration that is proper to work upon their Hopes and Fears, and thus, as far as is conſiſtent with the Freedom of rational Beings, even *compelling* them to be happy! How pleaſing to behold him as on *a Throne of Grace*, encouraging their Addreſſes, accepting their ſincere though imperfect Services, *pitying them as a Father pitieth his Children*, and, when he ſeeth it neceſſary to correct and chaſten them, doing it with great Tenderneſs, ſupporting and comforting them in their Tribulations, and cauſing *all Things to work together for their Good!* To conſider him as ſending his Angels to miniſter unto them, but eſpecially as communicating his Holy Spirit to enlighten, ſanctify, and comfort them, and to guide them ſafe through all the intricate Paths, the Snares and Difficulties of this Pilgrimage State! And, finally, which completeth all, to conſider him as having prepared, for all thoſe that ſincerely believe and obey him, everlaſting Glory and Felicity in the higheſt Heavens! To have enlarged

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Views of the Divine Goodneſs, as diſplaying and exerciſing itſelf in ſo many different Ways, and in ſuch a Variety of beneficial Effects and Inſtances, muſt needs fill the Heart of a truly religious and good Man with a ſublime Satisfaction and Joy, eſpecially when he is inabled to make a particular Application of all this to his own Caſe; when, being conſcious of his own Sincerity, and feeling his Heart powerfully drawn to the God of Love, he looks forward with a lively Faith to that bleſſed State, where he hopes to be perfectly happy in the Enjoyment of him to all Eternity. Then it is that he may with inexpreſſible Delight break forth into thoſe noble Strains of Devotion: *Oh give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his Mercy endureth for ever. Becauſe thy Loving-kindneſs is better than Life, my Lips ſhall praiſe thee. Thus will I bleſs thee, while I live; I will lift up my Hands in thy Name. Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth that I deſire beſides thee. How excellent is thy Loving-kindneſs, O God! therefore the Children of Men put their Truſt under the Shadow of thy Wings. They ſhall be abundantly ſatisfied with the Fatneſs of thy Houſe; and thou ſhalt make them*

them drink of the River of thy Pleaſures. For with thee is the Fountain of Life, and in thy Light ſhall we ſee Light. In thy Preſence is Fulneſs of Joy, and at thy right Hand there are Pleaſures for evermore.

Fourthly, We ſhould delight ourſelves God as a Being of ſpotleſs Purity and Holineſs, of impartial Righteouſneſs and Equity. " *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye Righteous, and give Thanks at the Remembrance of his Holineſs.* Pſ. xcvii. 12. God is called in Scripture, by Way of Eminency, *the Holy One*, and is ſaid to be *glorious in Holineſs. Righteous is God in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works.* Pſ. cxlv. 17. *He is the Rock, his Work is perfect, and all his Ways are Judgment; a God of Truth and without Iniquity, juſt and right is he.* Deut. xxxii. 4. This is the Voice of Scripture, and is perfectly agreeable to the ſoundeſt Reaſon. As his Underſtanding is infinite, he muſt have a clear and perfect Diſcernment of whatſoever is juſt and pure, and virtuous and lovely; and can never poſſibly, through Error and Miſtake, in any ſingle Inſtance, put Wrong for Right, or Right for Wrong. And agreeable to the pure Light of his infinite Mind is the perfect Rectitude of his Will, whereby he is invariably

variably and eternally determined to will and to do that which his unerring Underſtanding ſees to be juſt and good, to delight in Righteouſneſs and Purity, in moral Beauty and Order, and to abhor whatſoever is contrary thereunto. That Obſervation of St. *James* carries its own Evidence with it: *God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man.* Jam. i. 13. He can have nothing to turn him aſide from an inviolable Regard to the ſacred Rules of Juſtice, Righteouſneſs, and Equity; no falſe Judgment to miſlead him, no private Intereſt to biaſs him, no irregular Appetites and Paſſions to corrupt or pervert him. It naturally gives us Pleaſure to behold, even in an imperfect human Character, a ſteady Love and Practice of Righteouſneſs and Virtue, and a generous Abhorrence of Vice and Wickedneſs, though mixed with Weakneſs and Defects: And ſhall we not then admire and adore the great Original of Righteouſneſs and moral Excellency in whom it is to be found in the higheſt poſſible Degree of Perfection, from whom that of all other Beings is derived, and to whom as their glorious Exemplar they ſhould be all conformed! We read in Scripture of *the Beauty of Holineſs*. As Sin is the fouleſt Blemiſh

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and Deformity of a reaſonable Nature, ſo Holineſs and Righteouſneſs is it's true Beauty and Glory, and perfect Righteouſneſs is perfect Beauty in an intellectual and moral Senſe. With what Admiration and Delight then ſhould we raiſe our Views to the pure unblemiſhed Glories of the ſupreme Being, whoſe unpolluted Eſſence can never admit the leaſt Stain of moral Defilement: On this Account the bleſſed Angels celebrate and adore him, ſaying *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hoſts!* Iſ. vi. 3. and the Church joins in that noble Hymn of Praiſe: *Juſt and true are thy Ways, O thou King of Saints. Who ſhall not fear thee, and glorify thy Name? For thou only art holy.* Rev. xv. 3, 4. It cannot but yield the higheſt Satisfaction to a well-diſpoſed Mind to be aſſured that infinite Righteouſneſs governs the World, and preſideth over the univerſal Adminiſtration of Things! to obſerve the Holineſs and Righteouſneſs of God ſhining forth in the Precepts of his Law, and admirably exemplified in the Life and Practice of his well-beloved Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord! And then to conſider that infinitely holy and righteous Being as encouraging the imperfect Beginnings of Holineſs and Virtue here on

Earth, and ſending his Holy Spirit to aſſiſt our ſincere Endeavours! *The righteous Lord loveth Righteouſneſs, his Countenance doth behold the Upright.* Pſ. xi. 7. The great End of his Diſpenſations towards us is that *we may be made Partakers of his Holineſs* Heb. xii. 10. This therefore is that to which a good Man ardently aſpires, to make a conſtant Progreſs in real Holineſs of Heart and Life; and he looketh forward with Joy to the heavenly World, where he hopes to be free from all moral Defilement, and to be holy as God is holy, as far as the limited Capacity of his Nature will permit.

Fifthly, It is delightful to contemplate God as a Being of ſteady Faithfulneſs and Truth. This indeed may be juſtly regarded as a Branch of his Righteouſneſs, but it well deſerves to be diſtinctly conſidered, and is frequently celebrated in the ſacred Writings. God is there ſaid to be *abundant in Goodneſs and Truth.* Exod. xxxiv. 6. and is called by Way of Eminency *the God of Truth.* Iſ. lxv. 16. It is a melancholy Reflection, that there is ſo little Truth to be found among Mankind, ſo that we are ſometimes ready to ſay in our Haſte with the Pſalmiſt, *All Men are Liars.* Pſ. cxvi. 11. Their Words,

Words, their Promiſes, their profeſſed Friendſhips are little to be depended upon. But it is God's glorious Character, that *he cannot lie*. Tit. i. 2. It is as *impoſſible for him to lie*, as it is for him to *deny himſelf*. On him therefore we may ſafely rely, believing the Revelations he hath given us, truſting in his Word, and rejoicing in his Promiſes: *He will ever be mindful of his Covenant*. Juſtly therefore may we cry out with Joy and Tranſport: *For ever, O Lord, thy Word is ſettled in Heaven; thy Faithfulneſs is unto all Generations*. Pſ. cxix. 89, 90. *O praiſe the Lord, all ye Nations; praiſe him, all ye People: For his merciful Kindneſs is great towards us; the Truth of the Lord endureth for ever. Praiſe ye the Lord*. Pſ. cxvii.

This leads me to obſerve, That it mightily heighteneth the Pleaſure which a good Man taketh in the divine Perfections to conſider that this infinitely perfect and glorious Being is *from everlaſting to everlaſting the ſame*. All finite created Beings are liable to Change: The moſt perfect of them all may poſſibly, if left to themſelves, *fall from their Excellency*, their Righteouſneſs and Goodneſs, in a greater or leſſer Degree. But God is

abſolutely immutable in his Exiſtence and in his Perfections, and can never poſſibly become leſs perfect, leſs powerful, wiſe, good, and righteous than he is: *With him is no Variableneſs, nor Shadow of Turning.* Jam. i. 17. *The Counſel of the Lord ſtandeth for ever, the Thoughts of his Heart unto all Generations.* Pſ. xxxiii. 11. His moſt gracious Purpoſes of Love towards us are ſtable and ſure: *His Gifts and Calling are without Repentance.* Rom. xi. 29. What a ſolid Foundation doth this lay for a noble Confidence in God, and in Conſequence of this for a divine Joy! In him alone may the Mind, wearied with the Uncertainty and Inſtability of all earthly Things, ſafely and delightfully acquieſce, and enjoy a ſure and everlaſting Repoſe.

I add, that the Conſideration of the Divine Omnipreſence, which is ſo apt to ſtrike the Wicked with Terror, is full of Conſolation and Joy to good and upright Souls. How comforting is it to think that this unchangeably glorious and all-perfect *Jehovah*, this moſt wiſe, powerful, holy, and beneficent Being, *filleth Heaven and Earth*, and every Part of this vaſt Univerſe, *with his Preſence! He is not far from every one of us, ſeeing it is in him*

him that we live, and move, and have our Being. Acts xvii. 27, 28. A good Man may be baniſhed from his Houſe, from his Friends, and from his Country; but he cannot be baniſhed from his God. The Power and Malice of his greateſt Enemies cannot deprive him, or intercept his gracious Communications. His Joy may be ſaid to be ever near to him, ſince God is always near to him, who is the chief Object as well as Author of his Joy. What a pleaſing Thought is it, that, wherever he is, be it in a Wilderneſs or in a Dungeon, his *heavenly Father*, and *almighty Friend*, is with him there, who ſeeth all his Difficulties and Diſtreſſes, and is able to grant him all needful Aſſiſtances and Supports, and will in the End cauſe *all Things to work for his real Benefit!* The Man who firmly believes this, and ſincerely endeavours to approve himſelf to God in a Courſe of dutiful Obedience, may upon juſt Grounds *rejoice even in Tribulation*, ſaying, when Things have the moſt uncomfortable Aſpect, *I have ſet the Lord always before me; becauſe he is at my right Hand, I ſhall not be moved; therefore my Heart is glad, and my Glory rejoiceth*, &c. Pſ. xvi. 8.

From the ſeveral Conſiderations which have been mentioned, it appears that a ſteady Faith in God, which lies at the Foundation of all Religion, and the Contemplation of his incomparable Perfections, is a Fund of inward Satisfaction and Joy to a religious Mind. And God's requiring us to *delight ourſelves in him*, and propoſing himſelf to us to be our chief Joy, is a manifeſt Proof of his great Goodneſs towards us, and of his earneſt Deſire of our Happineſs. The immediate Viſion and Fruition of the Deity ſhall be an everlaſting Source of pure and refined Pleaſures to Angels and Saints in the heavenly World, and, in Proportion to our acquainting ourſelves with him in this preſent State, we ſhall feel a divine Joy ſpringing up in our hearts, and ſhall have Heaven brought down to us in ſome happy Beginnings here on Earth. How delightful is it to fix the Eye of the Mind upon the ſupreme original Beauty and Excellence, and to lay ourſelves open to it's infinite and ſacred Charms, compared with which the moſt lovely Objects in the whole Creation are Vanity and Emptineſs!

What Enemies are they therefore to their own Joy and Happineſs, who ſeldom

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or never raiſe their Views to that moſt glorious and amiable Being! Strange that reaſonable Creatures ſhould have ſuch a Diſinclination to think of him, to whom they owe it that they are able to think at all, and in whom alone they can be happy! What a perverted Frame of Mind doth this argue! Many there are to whom that Character may be juſtly applied, which the Pſalmiſt gives of the ungodly Man, that *God is not in all his Thoughts.* Pſ. x. 4. They *live as without God in the World*; as little do they for the moſt Part think of him, as if there were no ſuch Being: Or, if a Thought of God darteth into their Minds, it meets with no welcome Entertainment there: *They ſay unto God*, as *Job* repreſents them, *Depart from us, we deſire not the Knowledge of thy Ways.* Job xxi. 14. Few there are indeed who would openly avow this in Words; but it is their real Language. And what is this but, as far as in them lies, to baniſh themſelves from the Fountain of Joys! Juſtly doth the Pſalmiſt brand that Man with the Character of *a Fool*, who *ſaith in his Heart, There is no God*, or whoſe ſecret Wiſh it is that there were none; a Wiſh infinitely more monſtrous, than to wiſh the Sun out of the Firmament!

It is in Effect to wiſh all Joy and Happineſs out of the World, and that univerſal Darkneſs and Confuſion ſhould cover the Face of Things.

How different from this is the Temper and Character of the Man who *delighteth himſelf in God!* What are all the low and evanid Pleaſures of the voluptuous Senſualiſt, or of thoſe who go on in a perpetual Round of Diverſions and Amuſements, compared with the ſolid and noble Satisfaction which this Man feels in his own Breaſt! That we may be fitted for reliſhing this divine Joy, let us labour to get our Hearts cleanſed from baſe Luſts, and from corrupt and ſenſual Affections. Let us endeavour frequently to realiſe an inviſible Deity to our Minds in the Meditations of Faith, at the ſame Time humbly and earneſtly applying to him, *the Father of Lights*, that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to *ſhine in* upon our Souls, and cauſe us to behold more of his Glory. The more we habituate ourſelves this Way, the greater Satisfaction we ſhall find in it, and the more freely and delightfully will our Thoughts go forth towards that glorious Being, ſo as to be able to join in that rapturous Strain of the devout Pſalmiſt: *I will ſing unto the Lord*

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as long as I live; I will ſing Praiſe unto my God, while I have any Being. My Meditation of him ſhall be ſweet, I will be glad in the Lord. Pſ. civ. 33, 34. Here it is obſervable, that he not only calls God *the Lord, Jehovah*, but he calls him *his God: I will ſing Praiſe unto my God.* He claims a ſpecial Intereſt in him. And this is what raiſeth the Joy of a Man of real Piety to the greateſt Height. He doth not contemplate God and his Perfections, as we may admire a beautiful Object in which we have no Intereſt or Concern; but as it were appropriates him by a lively Faith, and can ſay, with humble Affiance, upon contemplating that glorious Being and his incomparable Perfections, *This is my God*, my rightful Lord, my ſatisfying Portion, and chief Good: *He is mine and I am his.* Oh tranſporting Thought! The Joy that ariſeth from a Senſe of this is what no Words can fully expreſs, but many excellent Perſons have had Experience of it in their own Breaſts. This Joy, where it is of the right Kind, ennobles and purifies the Soul, and will produce correſpondent Effects in the Temper and Practice. And indeed what we are to have principally in View, in our Meditations of the Deity, is not merely

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to furniſh a ſpeculative Entertainment to our Minds, but that we may be thereby formed into a divine and godlike Temper, and may have his amiable moral Excellencies copied out in our own Souls from that fair and glorious Original. When the Soul endeavoureth to lay itſelf open to his gracious Influences and Communications; when it is ſo captivated and inamoured with the View of the ſupreme Goodneſs, Righteouſneſs, and Purity, that it receiveth it within itſelf, and is *tranſformed* into it's Nature and Likeneſs; it is then that it may moſt properly be ſaid to *delight in God*. This it is to *have Communion with the Father, and with his Son* Jeſus Chriſt: *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him*. 1 Joh. iv. 16. This is true Religion, this is the Divine Life. The Soul hath then an inward Fund of Happineſs, a Source of pure and refined Joys, as being united to the ſupreme Good, and taking in the lively and delightful Impreſſions of his moſt excellent Virtues, his Glory and Beauty: *Beholding as in a Glaſs the Glory of the Lord*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *we are changed into the ſame Image from Glory to Glory*. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Thus it is in ſome Meaſure here on

on Earth, and ſhall be perfectly ſo in the heavenly State, that World of everlaſting Light and Love, where *we ſhall ſee him as he is, and ſhall behold his Face in Righteouſneſs, and be for ever ſatisfied with his Likeneſs.*

On Delighting in God's Works of Creation.

DISCOURSE III.

PSALM cxi. 2.

The Works of the Lord are great, ſought of all them that have Pleaſure therein.

IT is the great Advantage of Religion, and which ſhould mightily recommend it to our Eſteem and Choice, that what it injoins upon us as our Duty is really conducive to our higheſt Happineſs. Of this Kind is the Precept we have been conſidering, which requireth us *to delight ourſelves in God.* This is a Duty of great Extent. It includes

includes in the first Place our Delighting in the Fulness of his infinite Perfection, and in those incomparable Attributes and Excellencies which render him the worthy Object of the highest Love, Esteem, and Admiration of all reasonable Beings. Several of these Perfections and Attributes were distinctly considered, and it was shewn that the Contemplation and Belief of those glorious Perfections of the Deity, and a Sense of the special Interest which good Men have in them, must needs furnish a pure and noble Satisfaction and Joy to well-disposed Minds.

I now proceed to observe, that *our delighting in God* does also include our taking Pleasure in his wonderful Works, as exhibiting the Displays of his Glory. And indeed this is nearly connected with the former: For to delight in God's Works, in the Sense which we are now to consider it, is really to delight in his Perfections as shining forth in his marvellous Works. But it may be of use to treat of this Matter distinctly, and these Words of the Psalmist are very apposite to this Purpose: *The Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.* It is here given as the Character of truly good and religious Persons, that they have Pleasure in the

the Works of God: They ſeek them out, they make them the choſen Subject of their Contemplations and diligent Reſearches, not merely to gratify a ſpeculative Curioſity, but that they may be thereby led to love, to reverence, to admire and celebrate the glorious Author.

The Works of the Lord may for the greater Diſtinctneſs be diſtributed under three Heads, each of which, duly conſidered and improved, will miniſter juſt Ground of *delighting in him*; the Works of Creation, of Providence, and of Redemption.

Firſt, We ſhould delight in God's Works of Creation, *i. e.* we ſhould delight in contemplating the Diſcoveries of Glory as ſhining forth in the Creation of the World, and the various Orders of Beings in it. *The Glory of the Lord*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *ſhall endure for ever: The Lord ſhall rejoice in his Works.* He is repreſented as taking a Divine Satisfaction and Complacency in the Works which he hath made, the Contrivances of his own Wiſdom, and the Production of his Power and Goodneſs; and, if we could take a comprehenſive View of the great Syſtem of Nature, and behold all the Parts of it in their mutual Connections and Dependencies, in their various Relations to one another and to the Whole, what a raviſhing

viſhing and aſtoniſhing Scene would open to us! It is at beſt but a little Portion we now know of the Works of God; and yet even the partial and imperfect Views which we have of theſe Things furniſh a noble Entertainment to a pious Mind. How delightful is it to ſurvey, as far as we are able the ſeveral Parts of the Creation, and then to aſcend above them all to the ſupreme univerſal Cauſe, crying out with a devout Admiration, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power; for thou haſt created all Things, and for thy Pleaſure they are, and were created.* Rev. iv. 11.

Let us look back in our Thoughts to that Point of the immenſe Duration when this material World was formed, and here let us repreſent to our Minds a vaſt univerſal Void, and then behold the grand and ſtupendous Fabric riſing at the all-powerful Word of God out Non-exiſtence into Being, and into the beautiful Order in which we now ſee it; the more we conſider this, the more we ſhall be ſwallowed up in Aſtoniſhment: For, though it doth not imply a Contradiction to cauſe Things to exiſt which had no Exiſtence before, yet this is what we can form no Idea of, who are only accuſtomed to behold Things made

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out of pre-exiſtent Materials. And therefore we ſhould, when we reflect on this, turn all our Thoughts into Reverence and Admiration of that incomprehenſible Being, who only *ſpake, and it was done*, Pſ. xxxiii. 9. *He commanded, and they were created.* Pſ. cxlviii. 5.

The more to affect our Minds let us take a general View of the Greatneſs and vaſt Extent, of the Number and Variety, of the admirable Order and wiſe Contrivance of the Works of Creation.

Firſt, Let us take a View of the Greatneſs and vaſt Extent of God's Works of Creation. To them may be juſtly applied thoſe Words of the Pſalmiſt, *The Works of the Lord are great.* Many of the Works of Nature, which are really the Works of God, even in this lower World, have a Grandeur in them which ſtrikes us with Aſtoniſhment. Such are the lofty Mountains that ſeem to ſcale the Sky, thoſe ſtupendous Heaps of Stone which in many Parts of the Earth riſe and ſpread to an amazing Height and Bulk, and are ſtretched out in Length through many Regions; and yet how ſmall and inconſiderable are theſe compared with the whole Earth, this huge and ponderous Globe, which contains ſuch a prodigious Maſs and Quantity of Matter! But, if we purſue our Inquiries

farther, and compare this terraqueous Globe with the other Parts of this wide-extended Syſtem, it may not unfitly be likened to a ſmall round Ball hanging ſcarce diſcernible amidſt the unmeaſurable Spaces that ſurround it. To thoſe Beings which are placed in very diſtant Parts of the Univerſe it appeareth at beſt no bigger than the Planets do to us; and probably there are many ſo far removed from our Earth, as not to be capable of diſcerning it at all; ſo that they cannot know by their own Obſervation, that there is ſuch a Spot in the Creation. The fixed Stars that twinkle in our View, and which appear to us like ſo many minute glittering Spangles in the Firmament, are, by the Conſent of the ableſt Aſtronomers, Bodies of wonderous Bulk, much exceeding this earthly Globe in Magnitude. And how great the Number of them is none can tell: For the Stars that come within our View are but a Part, and perhaps a ſmall Part, of thoſe that are diſperſed throughout the vaſt Expanſe. Many of the heavenly Orbs, which cannot be diſcerned by the naked Eye, have in theſe latter Times been diſcovered by the Help of Teleſcopes; and there are probably many more which are removed at ſo immenſe a Diſtance, that no human Eye on Earth, though aided with

with all the Helps of Art, ſhall ever be able to get a Glimpſe of them. Thus there are as it were innumerable Worlds, extending one beyond another; and, when we endeavour to turn our Thoughts this Way; we ſoon loſe ourſelves in the Immenſity of Space, which exceedeth the utmoſt Flight of human Imagination. And ſhould not this general View of the Greatneſs and wide Extent of the Creation of God fill our Minds with a delightful Aſtoniſhment? It ſhould naturally lead us to reaſon after this Manner: How immenſe; how incomprehenſibly great, is that glorious Being, by whoſe *Word the Heavens were made, and all the Hoſt of them by the Breath of his Mouth*; who is repreſented in the noble Language of the Prophet, as *meting out the Heavens with a Span*, and whom *Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain!*

Secondly, Let us conſider not only the Greatneſs but the Number and Variety of the Works of God in the Creation. And, conſidered in this View, they muſt needs give Pleaſure to a religious Mind. They are ſo many and various, that they are only to be fully known and comprehended by the great Author of Nature. If we take a Survey even of this Earth, which is that Part of the Creation we are beſt ac-

quainted with, we are aſtoniſhed at the Multiplicity of Things which offer themſelves to our Obſervation. No human Mind can purſue inanimate Matter through all it's various ſurpriſing Transformations. It putteth on numberleſs different Appearances, and by it's manifold Combinations, and the Motions impreſſed upon it, is diverſified beyond what the moſt active and enlarged Imagination is able to conceive. Who can undertake to enumerate the Foſſils of various Kinds, Stones, Metals, Minerals, that are treaſured up in the Bowels of the Earth; or the Vegetables which ſpring up out of it's Boſom in inconceivable Quantities, and adorn it's Surface; the Trees in their ſeveral Species from the lowly Shrub to the ſtatelieſt Oak or Cedar; the Herbs and Plants of ſuch different Forms and Virtue; the ſeveral Sorts of Graſs and Grain, and the Flowers ſo inexpreſſibly various, and exquiſitely beautiful and pleaſing!

If we next turn our Views to the animal Part of the Creation, the whole Earth ſeemeth to be repleniſhed with living Creatures, and every Clod is ſwarming with Life; no Mortal is able to compute the Inſects of various Tribes, many of them ſo minute, as not to be diſcerned by the naked Eye: And perhaps there are yet more

more in Number which the fineſt Glaſſes have not been able to diſcover. And if from thence we proceed to the larger Kind of ſenſitive Beings, their Number and Variety is amazing; the Fiſhes which inhabit the watery Element; the Birds that wing the airy Region; the Beaſts that walk and tread upon the Earth in all their different Forms, Powers, and Inſtincts; to all which may be added thoſe of the human Species, the higheſt Order of Beings in this lower World, in their ſeveral Tongues, and Families, and Nations.

Such is the inconceivable Variety of Creatures upon this Earth, which is ſo ſmall a Part of the Creation. What then muſt it appear to be, if we could carry our Views throughout the vaſt Univerſe! How many other Orders of ſenſitive and and rational Beings there are in the ſeveral Regions of this wide extended Syſtem, we are at preſent unable to explore: But the Scriptures inform us of an *innumerable Company of Angels* who are repreſented as having their Dwellings in Heaven, and the Names by which they are deſcribed lead us to judge that they are of different Orders and Degrees; and there is Reaſon to believe that the leaſt of them is much ſuperior to Man.

Thirdly, Let us conſider the admirable Order and Beauty, the Exactneſs and wiſe Contrivance of God's Works of Creation, Wide beyond Imagination as the Extent of this World is, Order and a moſt wiſe Diſpoſition prevaileth throughout the whole. Thus it manifeſtly is in thoſe Parts of the Univerſe which come under our own particular Notice; and we may be ſure that it equally holdeth concerning all the reſt. The more accurate Inquiry we make into the Works of God, the more we obſerve of Order and Exactneſs in them. Many of the Objections, which were urged by atheiſtical Philoſophers of old againſt the Frame of the World, appear by later Diſcoveries to have proceeded from Ignorance or Miſtake: And thoſe Things which were cenſured as confuſed and irregular are found to be moſt wiſely and fitly ordered. This whole vaſt Maſs of Matter is ſubjected to ſteady Laws, wiſely appointed by the Creator in the Beginning: And this is what is commonly called *the Courſe of Nature*, whereby there is an eſtabliſhed Connection and mutual Dependence of Cauſes and Effects, proceeding according to ſtated Rules in a regular Order. If it were not for this, no Man could tell how

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to act or what to expect; no regular Knowledge of Nature could be obtained; nor could any Uſe be made of Experience, ſince the ſame Things in the ſame Circumſtances might produce one Effect this Day, and the next Day a quite contrary one.

The Scripture often taketh Notice of the regular ſtated Courſe and Order of Nature, eſtabliſhed by the Wiſdom and Power of the Creator. Hence we read *of the Ordinances of Heaven*, and *the Covenant of Day and Night*. God *cauſeth the Day-Spring to know his Place*. Job xxxviii. 12. He *appointed the Moon for Seaſons, and the Sun knoweth his Going down*. Pſ. civ. 19. The Stars, thoſe huge and ſtupendous Orbs, may ſeem to a ſuperficial Eye to be careleſly ſcattered through the wide Expanſe, but they are really diſpoſed with the moſt wiſe Contrivance, each of them placed in that Station, and in that Part of the Univerſe, which is fitteſt for them: *Lift up your Eyes on high, and behold who hath created theſe Things, that bringeth forth their Hoſt by Number: He calleth them all by Names, by the Greatneſs of his Power, not one faileth*. Iſ. xl. 26. That particular Solar Syſtem, to which we more eſpecially belong, is found according to the Obſervations of the moſt ſagacious In-

quirers into Nature, to be wonderfully beautiful, and ordered with great Wisdom. The ſeveral Planets are very regularly diſpoſed; their Courſes are determined; their Bulk and the Quantity of Matter which is in them is exactly adjuſted to their reſpective Motions and Diſtances from the Sun. And particularly this Earth of ours is placed in that Situation which is moſt proper for it: It's Bulk and Form is ſuch as is excellently adapted to that Situation; and it could neither be much bigger nor ſmaller than it is; neither brought much nearer the Sun, nor removed at a further Diſtance from it, without great Inconvenience. God is repreſented in the beautiful Language of the Prophet, as having, when he made the World, *comprehended the Duſt of the Earth in a Meaſure, and weighed the Mountains in Scales, and the Hills in a Balance.* Iſ. xl. 12. The Manner of Expreſſion ſhews that in forming this earthly Globe he adjuſted all the Parts of it in the moſt wiſe and exact Proportions. The ſame Thing is ſignified, when it is ſaid that *he laid the Meaſures of the Earth, and ſtretched the Line upon it.* Job xxxvii. 5. A Metaphor drawn from ſkilful Architects, who, building an Edifice, proceed by Rule,

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and according to the juſteſt Proportions. To the ſame Purpoſe Divine Wiſdom is repreſented as *making a Weight for the Winds, and weighing the Waters by Meaſure; as having made a Decree for the Rain, and a Way for the Lightning of the Thunder.* Job xxviii. 25, 26.

Thus Order every-where ſhines forth in the inanimate Creation. But there are ſtill greater Evidences of Wiſdom and Deſign in the Formation of living Creatures; even thoſe of them which ſeem to be the meaneſt, the moſt inconſiderable, ſuch as the minuteſt Inſects, are ſo admirably formed, and in the nice and exact Adjuſtment of their little Parts and Members ſuch exquiſite Skill is diſplayed, that they who have made the moſt diligent Reſearches into theſe Things have been at a Loſs how ſufficiently to expreſs their Admiration and Aſtoniſhment. As far as we are able diſtinctly to trace the different Species of Animals through their various Forms and Inſtincts, they are ſteadily directed to what is neceſſary for their Preſervation, their Food, and the Continuance of their Species, and are provided with Gratifications and Enjoyments ſuited to their ſeveral Natures. They have Organs excellently fitted for Motion and Sen-

Senſation, and peculiarly adapted to that particular Kind of Life for which they are deſigned. In all thoſe Things we may obſerve ſuch manifeſt Indications of orderly Contrivance, that we have Reaſon to cry out with the devout Pſalmiſt, *O Lord, how manifold are thy Works! in Wiſdom haſt thou made them all.*

Who can undertake to deſcribe the innumerably various Ranks in the Scale of Beings, riſing in an orderly Progreſſion, one above another, the higheſt of an inferior Species coming near to the loweſt of an higher Order, ſo that there is no diſagreeable Chaſm in the Creation, but a beautiful Harmony is ſpread through the Whole? How delightful muſt it be to purſue them through all their various Degrees of Life and Capacities for Enjoyment, till we arrive to the great Fountain of Life, the glorious ſelf-exiſtent *Jehovah*, from whom they and all their Powers are derived!

But it is in the rational and moral Part of the Creation that the Glory of God is moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed. The nobleſt of them, of which we have any Account, are the bleſſed Angels. And undoubtedly, if we had a clear and diſtinct View of their vaſt and ſublime Capacities, their mighty

Power

Power and Activity, the Extent of their Underſtanding and Knowledge, and the Height of moral Excellency to which they are capable of attaining, it would raiſe in us the higheſt Conceptions of Wiſdom Goodneſs, as well as Power, of the Creator; but we know little of them at preſent. The only Creature of the rational and moral Kind that we are well acquainted with is Man. And a conſiderate Survey of our own Nature could not fail to fill us with Wonder and Delight. How admirable is the Frame of the human Body! comprehending in ſo ſmall a Compaſs a ſurpriſing Variety of Parts, many of them exquiſitely minute and fine, all of them contrived with the moſt amazing Skill, and not one of them without it's proper Uſe. If we conſider the Dignity of it's Form, the curious Structure of it's ſeveral Veſſels and Organs ſo excellently adapted for all the Functions of the Animal Life, and with Regard to which, after the Inquiries of ſo many Ages, there are ſtill new Diſcoveries made, and new Wonders opening to our View; ſhould not this cauſe us to break forth into that rapturous Act of Devotion: *I will praiſe thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knoweth*

knoweth right well. Pſ. cxxxix. 14. But above all it ſhould fill us with a devout Admiration of the Deity to conſider the nobler Part of our Nature, in which we more nearly reſemble the pure intellectual Eſſence of the ſupreme Being. How excellent are the Faculties of the human Soul! The Underſtanding, whereby it is capable of knowing and contemplating not only ſenſible and material Objects, but Things ſpiritual and inviſible, and the moſt perfect and glorious of all Beings, God himſelf; the Imagination, whereby it can form innumerable ſprightly Images of Things which ſtrike the Mind with great Force; the Memory, in which, as in an ample and faithful Repoſitory, is treaſured up a prodigious Variety of Ideas relating to numberleſs Subjects of various Kinds. But eſpecially let us conſider the moral Powers with which Man is endued; the Principle of Reaſon, which is deſigned to preſide over and to govern the ſenſitive Appetites and Paſſions; the ſelf-determining Power of the Will, which makes him Maſter of his own Actions, and accountable for them; the inward Senſe he hath, when not depraved by corrupt Habits and Prejudices, of Good and Evil, Right and Wrong, of the Beauty

and

and Excellency of Virtue and moral Goodneſs, and the Turpitude and Deformity of Vice and Sin; the Power he hath of reflecting upon himſelf and his own Actions, with the unſpeakable Satisfaction which ariſeth from a Conſciouſneſs of Well-doing, and the Horror and Remorſe which he is ſubject to from a Senſe of a contrary Conduct; the kind and ſocial Affections implanted in the human Heart, which ſhew that Man was deſigned not merely to conſult his own private Intereſt, but to promote the public Good and the Happineſs of others as well as his own; and, finally, the Power he hath of looking forwards to Futurity, and carrying his Views beyond the utmoſt Limits of this preſent Life: All theſe Things demonſtrate him to be a noble Creature, a moral Agent, originally formed and deſigned for high Degrees of Virtue and Happineſs.

To all which may be added the admirable Laws of the vital Union between Soul and Body, whereby Subſtances of ſuch different Natures are moſt cloſely and intimately joined. By virtue of this Union Man is rendered capable of taking in and reliſhing Beauties and Pleaſures both of a material and ſenſible, and of an intellectual

tual Kind; and there is a close Connection established between certain Motions and Impressions on the bodily Organs and certain Affections and Sensations in the Soul; and all the Senses are adjusted in such a Manner as is most proper for the Use and Convenience of human Life. Man considered in this View is one of the most wonderful Compositions in all Nature, nearly allied to the spiritual and material World, and uniting both in himself.

Thus have we taken a brief and general Survey of the Works of Creation. And with Regard to them we may justly say that *the Works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have Pleasure therein.* One End for which such noble Faculties were given us was certainly this, that we should search into and contemplate God's wonderful Works. Nor must we imagine that none can do this but Persons of Learning and who have made a Progress in philosophical Studies. Common Reason and Attention, with such Helps as any Man may obtain who is heartily desirous to be informed, will lead us into such a Knowledge of these Things as is sufficient to fill our Souls with Wonder and Delight, and to excite

excite and enlarge holy and devout Affections in our Hearts. There is none of us but muſt be ſenſible, that we might turn our Thoughts this Way more frequently than we do; and a Mind duly diſpoſed to this ſacred Excerciſe would find many Opportunities for making delightful Excurſions into the Works of God in the World about us, and admiring his glorious Perfections as manifeſted in them. One particular Deſign of ſetting a Part one Day in ſeven to the Purpoſes of Religion is declared to be this, that we ſhould commemorate the Creation of the World. We do not therefore anſwer the Intention of that wiſe Inſtitution, if we do not frequently contemplate *the inviſible Things of God, which are clearly ſeen from the Creation of the World, being underſtood by the Things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* This would have a manifeſt Tendency to form us to a devout and truly religious Temper of Mind, and to produce in us a pure and ſublime Delight to which no fleſhly Gratifications are worthy to be compared.

When we behold that glorious Body the Sun, and feel its chearing Influences and Beams, which diffuſe Light and Warmth to numberleſs Beings: When we

view

view the ample Sky ſpread out as a fair and magnificent Canopy over our Heads, and obſerve the Balancings of the Clouds, with all their beautiful and grateful Variety of Shades and Colourings: When we hear the Winds blow, and the Thunder roar, and ſee the Rains deſcend with Water and refreſh the Earth; and feel the Air breathing upon us its balmy and reviving Influence: When we obſerve the orderly Returns of the Seaſons, the Beauties of the blooming Spring, the Summer and Autumn with their delicious Fruits and joyful Harveſt, and even the Rigours of Winter, and the pleaſing Varieties of a froſty Scene and a ſnowy Landſcape, all uſeful and beautiful in their Seaſon: When we ſurvey the vaſt Ocean, that aſtoniſhing Collection of Waters in which there are innumerable living Creatures, ſome of them huge in Bulk, and all of them peculiarly fitted for inhabiting the watery Element: When we behold the high aſpiring Mountains, and lowly Vales, and wide-extended Plains; the verdant Fields, and winding Brooks and Rivers; the Woods and Groves, with their ſtately Trees and humble Shrubs and Plants; the Flowers in all their exquiſite Beauties; with the ſeveral Kinds of Herbage and Grain, which

which furniſh Food for Man and Beaſt: When we turn our Eyes to the numberleſs Animals that live and move around us, the Fowls of the Air and Beaſts of the Field; ſome of them remarkable for their Beauty, others for their Strength; ſome to be admired for their Swiftneſs, others for their Courage, or for their Sagacity and the Acuteneſs of their Senſes; and contributing in various Ways to the Convenience or Entertainment of human Life: When we farther conſider that in the Night Seaſons, whilſt Darkneſs ſeems to hide the Beauties of the Creation, and to ſpread a Vail over this lower World, a new and glorious Proſpect openeth to us, than which nothing can be better fitted to ſtrike the Mind with a pleaſing Aſtoniſhment: When we behold the Moon ſhining in it's Brightneſs, the Firmament all glowing with innumerable Stars which ſparkle in our Sight, and which, in the Judgment of thoſe who have moſt carefully examined theſe Things, are Bodies of amazing Magnitude as well as Splendor, removed at a vaſt Diſtance from our Earth and from one another. But, above all, when we attentively conſider the wonderful Structure of our own Bodies, and the noble and excellent Faculties of

our Souls, by which we are ſo far raiſed above the brute Animals, and are made after the Divine Image, capable of a ſublime and everlaſting Felicity: Surely in all theſe Things a religious Mind may trace the illuſtrious Footſteps of the Deity, and find Matter of delightful Admiration! A good Man can never want Entertainment, when he hath the Works of God continually before his Eyes. He hath a far nobler Pleaſure in them than other Men, for they not only gratify his Curioſity, but raiſe his Devotion. He aſcendeth above theſe outward ſenſible Things to the great inviſible Author, and whilſt he contemplateth the Works of Nature in the World above him, he conſidereth himſelf as ſurrounded by the bright Beams of the Divinity, the glorious Evidences of infinite Wiſdom, Power, and Goodneſs. He ſees the great Name of God inſcribed in legible Characters upon every Part of this vaſt univerſal Frame, and can ſay concerning all Things around him, *Theſe are the Works of God.* The whole World is to him an auguſt Temple of the Divinity, repleniſhed with his Preſence and Glory; a magnificent Palace, gloriouſly decorated and adorned by a Divine Hand. Others may amuſe them-

themſelves with the Beauties of the Creation, without looking farther; but he beholdeth, loveth, adoreth God in them. Thus did the pious Pſalmiſt: An excellent Specimen of which, we have in the civth. Pſalm, that admirable Hymn of Praiſe in which he ſtirreth up his Soul, and all his inward Powers, *to bleſs and praiſe the Lord* for his Works of Creation and Providence; and concludes with this Divine Reſolution, *I will ſing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will ſing Praiſes unto my God whilſt I have any Being: My Meditation of him ſhall be ſweet; I will be glad in the Lord.* Pſ. civ. 33, 34. In like Manner, in the cxlviiith Pſalm, he calleth upon all the Orders of Creatures, from the higheſt to the meaneſt, to form one univerſal Concert for celebrating the Praiſes of the great Creator and Parent of the Univerſe. To the ſame Purpoſe in the ciii Pſalm, after having addreſſed himſelf to the holy Angels, the nobleſt Order of created Beings, to *bleſs the Lord*, he adds, *Bleſs the Lord, all his Works, in all Places of his Dominion: Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul.* Pſ. ciiid. 20, 21, 22.

What happy Lives do thoſe lead who thus take Occaſion from the Objects which daily preſent themſelves to their View,

to adore the great Former of all Things! who regard all the Creatures as the Monuments of his Praiſe, and, when they taſte their Sweetneſs or admire their Beauty, are thereby led to the ſupreme original Goodneſs and Excellence! How mean and how low, compared with this, are the Pleaſures of thoſe who are abſolutely immerſed in ſenſual Enjoyments, or who ſpend their whole Time in trifling Diverſions and Amuſements, whilſt they in a great Meaſure neglect the chief End of their Being! But let us act a nobler Part, as becometh reaſonable Creatures and *Chriſtians*. It is true Religion alone that teacheth us to make a right Uſe of the Creatures, to ſpiritualiſe material Objects, and to diſcern the Impreſſions of the Divine Glory upon them. What a juſt Foundation doth this lay for the nobleſt Joys, which tend not only to delight but to exalt and purify our Souls, and to prepare us for that State where we hope to ſee God, not merely in the Glaſs of the Creation, but to *behold him Face to Face*, and to join with an innumerable Company of Angels and glorified Saints in admiring, adoring, obeying, and enjoying him to all Eternity.

On Delighting in God's Works of Providence.

DISCOURSE IV.

PSALM CXI. 2.

The Works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have Pleaſure therein.

IN the foregoing Diſcourſe it was ſhewn, that God's Works of Creation, duly conſidered and improved, have a Tendency both to fill the Heart with the moſt adoring Thoughts of his Divine Majeſty, and with holy Affections and Diſpoſitions towards him, and alſo to produce a pure and noble Pleaſure, which will greatly contribute to the Satisfaction of a good Man's Life.

Let us now turn our Views to God's

Works of Providence. And here alſo a glorious Subject preſents itſelf to our Minds, which openeth a large and ample Field in which we may delightfully expatiate. The Works of Providence are what the Pſalmiſt ſeems here to have eſpecially in View, and which it is the principal Deſign of this Pſalm to celebrate. And theſe *Works of the Lord* may be juſtly ſaid to be *great, ſought out of all them that have Pleaſure therein.* A good Man ſearcheth into them, not from a vain and preſumptuous Curioſity, but with a pious and upright Intention to reverence and adore the moſt wiſe and righteous Lord and Governor of the World, and to ſtrengthen his Faith and Confidence in him, which will naturally produce a divine Satisfaction and Delight.

The Works of Providence may be comprehended under two main Heads: God's Preſervation of the World and his Government of it. And both furniſh a moſt uſeful and delightful Subject for our Meditations.

Firſt, The Providence of God is exerciſed in preſerving and ſuſtaining this World which he hath created, and all the Orders of Beings in it. Hence in that noble Addreſs to God made in the Name of the *Jewiſh* Church, *Nehem.* ix. 6, after having

having ſaid, *Thou, even thou, art Lord alone: Thou haſt made Heaven, the Heaven of Heavens with all their Hoſts; the Earth and all Things that are therein; the Seas and all that is therein*; it is added, *and thou preſerveſt them all.* We muſt not imagine that, when the Creatures are once brought into Being, they are able to continue themſelves in Exiſtence, without any farther Care of the Almighty; No. They depend on the Hand which firſt formed them for their continual Conſervation. He *upholdeth all Things by the Word of his Power*, and it is *by or in him that all Things conſiſt.* It is by his conſtant wiſe and powerful Influence, acting on every Part of this vaſt univerſal Syſtem, that what we uſually call *the Courſe of Nature* is maintained, and that all Things in the inanimate Creation ſtill proceed according to a ſettled Rule and Order. To this it is owing, that the Sun, Moon, and Stars preſerve their ſeveral Courſes or Stations, from which they have not deviated through ſo long a Succeſſion of Ages; that the ſeveral Viciſſitudes of Seaſons conſtantly return, ſo that *Seed-time and Harveſt, and Cold and Heat, and Summer and Winter, and Day and Night do not ceaſe.* Gen. viii. 22. and that *the Earth* continueth *to bring forth abundantly* in

an orderly Series ſuch an amazing Variety of Productions. The Minerals are ſtill generated and ripened in it's Bowels; and the Herbs, Trees, Flowers, and various Kinds of Grain, preſerve their ſeveral Virtues, and their diſtinct Forms and Appearances. To this alſo it is owing, that the different Species of Animals are preſerved, and continue to be furniſhed in all Ages with the ſame Organs and Appetites for exerciſing the various Functions of the ſenſitive Life. The ſame Obſervation holds with Regard to the higher Orders of rational intellectual Beings, none of them have an independent Exiſtence. By the ſuſtaining Influence of the Almighty the glorious Angels are maintained in their noble immortal Life, and in the Uſe and Exerciſe of their admirable and ſublime Powers. And, as to the human Race, it is *in him that we live, and move, and have our Being*, as St. *Paul* obſerves, *Acts* xvii. 26. To his providential Care and Concourſe it is to be aſcribed, that the human Body ſtill retaineth it's curious Form and all it's exquiſite Organs; that the animal and vital Functions are carried on; and that the human Soul is upheld in it's noble Faculties, and inabled to put them forth to Action. Who can attentively conſider this univerſal Dependence of the whole

whole Creation upon God, and not be filled with the moſt adoring Thoughts of that incomprehenſible *Jehovah*, whoſe everlaſting Exiſtence is the ſtable Support of the Exiſtence of all other Beings whatſoever! And what Satisfaction muſt it yield to a truly good and religious Mind to reflect, that the Order of Nature is maintained by that infinitely wiſe and almighty Being who firſt formed and eſtabliſhed it, and without which it would ſoon be diſſolved and fall into Confuſion.

Secondly, The Providence of God is to be conſidered as governing the World as well as preſerving it: *The Lord hath eſtabliſhed his Throne in the Heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all.* Pſ. ciii. 19. This vaſt Univerſe is his Empire, the Extent of which tranſcendeth all human Imagination. How many different Orders of Beings there are which inhabit the ſeveral Parts of this vaſt ſtupendous Frame, we cannot tell. But, whatever they be, they are all of them, from the higheſt to the meaneſt, under the Government of God. If we could but carry our Views to the heavenly World, how would our Hearts be raviſhed with the Beauty and Harmony of the Divine Adminiſtrations, as exerciſed there towards the Angelic Orders, thoſe pure and glorious

Spirits

Spirits which inhabit the boundleſs Realms of Light and Joy! and even the Devils themſelves are under his ſovereign Controul. By a Wiſdom which exceedeth our Comprehenſion, he ſetteth Bounds to their Rage, and over-ruleth their moſt pernicious Counſels and Attempts to the further Manifeſtation of his Glory, and often ordereth it ſo, that, whilſt they only think of gratifying their own Malice and evil Inclinations, they are really carrying on the Deſign of his Providence. But theſe are Things we know little of at preſent. There is enough, in that Part of the Syſtem which cometh within our own particular Notice, to fill us with admiring Thoughts of God's providential Government. Even the inanimate Creation, though incapable of being ruled by Laws in the ſtrict Senſe of the Word, yet may be ſaid to be under his Government, and are applied by him to anſwer the wiſe Purpoſes of his Adminiſtration. Thus, in the noble Language of Scripture, *Hail and Rain, and ſtormy Vapour fulfil his Word.* Pſ. cxlviii. 8. *The Lightnings ſay unto him, Here we are,* Job xxxviii. 35. *The Clouds are turned about by his Counſels, that they may do whatſoever he commandeth them upon the Face of the Earth.* Job xxxvii. 12. Even when Things go

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on in their uſual Way, and nothing happeneth but what is agreeable to the ordinary Powers and Properties of Things. God in his wiſe Providence ſo ordereth and governeth the Courſe of material Cauſes as to correſpond with and fulfil the Intentions of his moral Adminiſtration towards Mankind. But ſometimes it pleaſeth him to interpoſe in a more extraordinary and miraculous Way, the more effectually to awaken in Men a Senſe of his ſupreme Dominion, as he is the abſolute Lord of Nature, who can over-rule the Courſe of Things in the material World, as ſeemeth fit to his infinite Wiſdom, for excellent and valuable Purpoſes.

God's providential Government may be alſo conſidered as exerciſed towards the Animal Creation. As he hath furniſhed the ſeveral Sorts of Animals with their various Organs, Appetites, and ſenſitive Powers; ſo he governeth them in ſuch a Manner as is ſuited to the Natures he hath given them, and to the Ends and Uſes for which they are deſigned. The wonderful Inſtincts, which ſerve as a Guide to them in many Caſes, are not properly owing to any Reaſon or Wiſdom of their own, but to the ſuperior Wiſdom and Power of him who firſt formed them, and ſtill exerciſeth a Su-

a Superintendency over them. The Care of the Divine Providence towards the brutal Kinds is frequently repreſented in the ſacred Writings.—Remarkable to this Purpoſe is that beautiful Paſſage of the Pſalmiſt: *Theſe all wait upon thee, that thou mayeſt give them their Meat in due Seaſon. That thou giveſt them they gather; thou openeſt thy Hand, they are filled with Good. Thou hideſt thy Face, they are troubled; thou takeſt away their Breath, they die and return to their Duſt. Thou ſendeſt forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou reneweſt the Face of the Earth.* Pſ. civ. 27, 28, 29, 30. Agreeable to this is the Doctrine of our bleſſed Saviour. *Behold*, ſaith he, *the Fowls of the Air; for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into Barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.* Matt. vi. 26. And he aſſureth us, that *not one of them is forgotten before God.* Luke xii. 6. If we had a diſtinct View of all the various Kinds of living Creatures, and the Proviſion that is continually made for them, what a high Idea would it give us of the immenſe Power, Wiſdom, and Benignity of the univerſal Lord, who ſo governeth the animal World, that all the Orders of ſenſitive Beings, even the loweſt and meaneſt, have each of them their proper Exerciſes and Gratifi-

Gratifications filled and accommodated to their ſeveral Natures and Capacities, and are alſo made to contribute to the Uſe and Service of thoſe of an higher Rank in the Scale of Beings. And particularly it is evident that the ſeveral Species of Animals on this our Globe are kept in a Subordination and Subſerviency to Man; and that God in his over-ruling Providence maketh uſe of them as Inſtruments for executing his Purpoſes, whether of Mercy or Judgment, towards the human Race. When we conſider theſe Things, how ſhould we call upon all the Creatures that live and move around us to bleſs the great Lord of the Univerſe! And, ſince the brute Animals are unable to do it of themſelves, let us offer up a Tribute of Praiſe to God on their Account as well as on our own, and lend them our Voice and Songs; a noble Specimen of which we have in the rapturous Strains of the devout Pſalmiſt in the cxlviiith Pſalm, where he calleth upon *Beaſts and all Cattle, creeping Things, and flying Fowl to praiſe the Lord.*

But this leadeth me to obſerve, that, if the Care and Government of Divine Providence extended to the inferior brute Animals, much more to the rational and nobler Part of the Creation. God's Government

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of moral Agents is the moſt admirable Part of the Divine Adminiſtrations, and in which his glorious Perfections are made moſt illuſtriouſly manifeſt. To govern Numbers *which no Man can number* of reaſonable Beings, ſo very various in their Thoughts, Inclinations, and Counſels, each of whom have a Will of their own, and a Power of determining their own Actions; to inſpect their very Hearts and Thoughts, as well as their outward Actions, and accordingly to diſpenſe to them proper Retributions, and to order Events ſo as not to infringe that Liberty of chuſing and acting which belongeth to them, as intelligent and accountable Beings; I ſay, thus to govern them muſt needs argue a Wiſdom, as well as a Power, which exceedeth our Comprehenſion, and can only be found in the infinite Mind; and, as Man is the only Creature in this lower World that can properly be regarded as a moral Agent, God's providential Government towards the human Race is what it moſt nearly concerneth us to conſider. And a conſtant Regard to this is what eminently diſtinguiſheth the truly good and religious Man; it neceſſarily entereth into his Character, and is indeed the great Support and Comfort of his Life.

For, Firſt, He holdeth it as a certain Prin-

Principle, that, as God's Government over us is founded on the juſteſt and moſt unqueſtionable Right, ſo it is always adminiſtered in the beſt Manner. For this the immutable Perfection of his Nature gives us the higheſt poſſible Security. As his Underſtanding and Wiſdom is infinite, he muſt needs know in every poſſible Inſtance what is fitteſt to be done. As his Power is almighty, he muſt be always able to execute his moſt wiſe Purpoſes. As he is preſent to the whole Creation, he hath every Thing under his own Eye. As he is of perfect Righteouſneſs and Equity, he can never be biaſſed to do a wrong Thing. And, as he is of boundleſs Goodneſs and Benignity, the End he hath in View, in his Government of reaſonable Beings, is to promote their Happineſs, in ſuch a Way as is worthy of himſelf, and ſuited to their reaſonable Natures, and conſiſtent with their moral Agency. His Government is indeed in the ſtricteſt Senſe independent, ſupreme, and abſolute, and accountable to none. Nor is there any Thing in this, if rightly conſidered, which ſhould be Matter of Terror and Diſcouragement to a good Mind. On the contrary, abſolute Power and Sovereignty, when it is in Conjunction with the moſt perfect Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and

and Goodneſs, is the moſt comfortable Thing in the World. The more abſolute it is in this Caſe the better, and the greater is our Security. For this muſt needs raiſe him above all Poſſibility of being tempted to Evil, and he muſt needs be poſſeſſed of an infinite Generoſity of Mind, which will carry him to do the greateſt Good, this being the nobleſt Exerciſe of abſolute Power and Dominion. A Perſuaſion of this naturally tends to fill the Heart of a good Man with a Divine Confidence and Joy.

Secondly, He firmly believes that all the Events which befall us, whether proſperous or adverſe, are under the Direction and Superintendency of Divine Providence. This is the conſtant Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures. Hence God is introduced as declaring, *I form the Light, and create Darkneſs: I make Peace, and create Evil: I the Lord do all theſe Things.* Iſ. xlv. 7. where by *Light* and *Peace* we are to underſtand Proſperity and Comfort, and by *Darkneſs* and *Evil* we are to underſtand Trouble and Adverſity; and it is ſignified that both the one and the other are under his ſupreme Direction. This is eſpecially true of all thoſe Events in which the Public is concerned. The Revolutions of Kingdoms and States, to whatſoever Cauſes they are immediately

mediately owing, are diſpoſed and over-ruled by his wiſe and ſovereign Providence: *He changeth the Times and Seaſons; he removeth Kings, and ſetteth up Kings.* Dan. ii. 21. *Promotion cometh neither from the Eaſt nor from the South; but God is the Judge; he putteth down one, and ſetteth up another.* Pſ. lxxv. 6, 7. *He leadeth Princes away ſpoiled, and overthroweth the Mighty. He increaſeth the Nations, and deſtroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations, and ſtraiteneth them again.* Job xii. 19, 23. A truly religious Man regardeth theſe various Changes, not as the Effects of blind Chance, or as the Sports of *Fortune*, which is only another Word for Chance; but as all conducted with the moſt wiſe Deſign. And, though he is far from excluding ſecond Cauſes and Inſtruments, he looketh above them to the ſupreme Lord and Governor of the World, and can with great Satisfaction conſider him as preſiding over thoſe Events, and over-ruling them all to valuable Purpoſes. And not only doth God ſuperintend Events of a public Nature, but thoſe which relate to particular Perſons. He ordereth Men's outward Condition and Circumſtances in the World, as ſeemeth fit to his infinite Wiſdom: *The Lord maketh Poor, and maketh Rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiſeth up the Poor out of the*

Duſt, and lifteth up the Beggar from the hill. 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8. Even thoſe Things which we commonly call Accidents, and which appear to us to be caſual and fortuitous do not happen to us without the Divine Direction or Permiſſion. What a comfortable Conſideration is this, and what a ſtable Foundation doth it lay for a peaceable Confidence, and a calm Acquieſcence in every Condition and Circumſtance of Life; Whatſoever Succeſs a pious Man meets with in his lawful Endeavours, whatſoever good Things he enjoys, he receives them with Thankfulneſs as the Effects of the Divine Goodneſs; and this greatly heighteneth the Pleaſure he finds in them. And, on the other Hand, if he be exerciſed with Troubles of various Kinds, he conſiders them as wiſely ordered or permitted by an overruling Providence. And there cannot be a more effectual Remedy than this againſt thoſe Cares and Anxieties, thoſe Fears and Sorrows, which imbitter human Life, and deſtroy the Peace and Comfort of it.

From what hath been obſerved it follows,

Thirdly, That it muſt needs be a noble and pleaſing Employment to a religious Mind to endeavour to trace God's illuſtrious Footſteps in his Providential Diſpenſations, and to admire the Characters of the

Divine

Divine Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and Goodneſs in them: *Whoſo is wiſe, and will obſerve theſe Things*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *even they ſhall underſtand the Loving-kindneſs of the Lord.* Pſ. cvii. 43. How delightful is it, in reviewing God's preſent or paſt Dealings towards the Church and World, to conſider the admirable Conduct and Beauty of Providence as appearing in many remarkable Inſtances! To obſerve how thoſe Things, which at firſt had the moſt diſcouraging Aſpect, have afterwards appeared to have been moſt wiſely and kindly ordered! Good has been brought out of Evil, and Order out of Confuſion; and even the Malice and Wickedneſs of Men, and their Devices and Attempts againſt God's faithful Servants and the Intereſts of Religion, have by a wonderful Agency been over-ruled to the Advantage of both. How often have great Events been brought about by the moſt inconſiderable and unlikely Means, and thoſe Projects, which were formed with the deepeſt Contrivance, have by an unexpected Turn been ſurpriſingly diſappointed, and *the Wiſe taken in their own Craftineſs*! It hath frequently happened, that the Wicked have been remarkably blaſted in the Midſt of their Proſperity; and on the other Hand oppreſſed Virtue hath been

wonderfully ſupported and rendered more illuſtrious by its Trials, and hath come forth brighter out of the Furnace. A good Man, who carefully remarketh the Hand of God in the Events which befall Mankind, hath a Satisfaction in them that others are Strangers to, and often ſees the maſterly Strokes of Providence in Things which ſuperficial Beholders paſs over with a ſlight Regard. And, even in reviewing the Occurrences of his own Life, he obſerves many Things which lead him to acknowledge and adore the Divine Providence, both in the proſperous and afflictive Events which he has met with; and can trace a wiſe, a kind, and righteous Deſign in them.

I add, Fourthly, That, where he is not able to account for the Reaſons of the Divine Diſpenſations, yet he is ſtill perſuaded that they are all ordered for worthy and excellent Ends, though he hath not at preſent a diſtinct Diſcernment of them. According to the ſtaid Conſtitution of Things, which is the Appointment of Divine Providence, Righteouſneſs and Virtue ordinarily tends to the Satisfaction and Advantage of human Life; and a Diſſoluteneſs of Manners ſubjects thoſe who abandon themſelves to it to many Evils, even in this preſent State. Yet it cannot be denied, that

that it frequently happens that Vice and Wickedneſs makes a very flouriſhing Appearance: The vileſt Men are exalted, and ſeem to be favoured with a continual Courſe of Proſperity and Succeſs; whilſt thoſe that are *the Excellent of the Earth* are expoſed to Perſecution and Reproach, *deſtitute, afflicted, tormented.* Many are the diſorderly and diſmal Scenes which the proſperous Fraud or Violence of the Ungodly, the Cries of the Injured and Oppreſſed, and the Sighs of the Miſerable, preſent to our View. But, under all theſe melancholy Appearances, a truly religious Man comforteth himſelf with this, that all Things are under the Direction and Government of the abſolutely perfect Being, who is carried by the unchangeable Rectitude of his Nature, and the Reaſon of his all-comprehending Mind, always to take thoſe Meaſures which are beſt and fitteſt upon the Whole. He therefore attributes every ſeeming Irregularity in God's Providential Diſpenſations to our own Short-ſightedneſs and the Narrowneſs of our Views, ſince at preſent we can only take in a ſmall Part of his Ways, and do not behold them in their juſt Connection and Harmony; and he is perſuaded that in the final Iſſue it will appear that all Things were ordered in the wiſeſt and propereſt Manner.

Amidſt all the Confuſions of this lower World, he placeth his Confidence in him who *ſtilleth the Noiſe of the Seas, the Noiſe of their Waves, and the Tumult of the People.* Pſ. lxv. 7. When Trouble and Perplexity ſeem to be on every Side, he can ſay, with the devout Pſalmiſt, *In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul.* Pſ. xciv. 19. It is given as the Character of *the Man who feareth the Lord, and delighteth greatly in his Commandments,* that *he ſhall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord.* Pſ. cxii. 1, 7. Though he finds himſelf ſometimes obliged to cry out, *O the Depth both of the Wiſdom and Knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways paſt finding out!* Rom. xi. 33. Yet ſtill he is perſuaded that *the Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all Works.* Pſ. cxlv. 17. And that, even when *Clouds and Darkneſs are about him,* yet *Righteouſneſs and Judgment, are the Habitation,* or *Eſtabliſhment of his Throne.* Pſ. xcvii. 2. And therefore he *reſteth in the Lord,* and *waiteth patiently for him,* and, inſtead of arraigning the Divine Procedure, he is ſatisfied that all God's Providential Adminiſtrations, however they may appear at preſent, are ordered

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and conducted with admirable Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and Equity.

It is manifeſt from theſe ſeveral Conſiderations which have been offered, that religious Meditations on God's Works of Providence cannot but be a Fountain of Conſolation and Joy to good Men. In what a noble Strain doth the Pſalmiſt expreſs himſelf, ſpeaking of theſe Things in the xciid Pſalm, which is called *a Pſalm or Song for the* Sabbath-day! *Thou, Lord, haſt made me glad through thy Works; I will triumph in the Works of thine Hands. O Lord, how great are thy Works! and thy Thoughts are very deep. A brutiſh Man knoweth not, neither doth a Fool underſtand this. When the Wicked ſpring up as Graſs, and when all the Workers of Iniquity do flouriſh, it is that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever: But thou, Lord, art moſt High for evermore.* Pſ. xcii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. What a joyful Conſideration is it, that the World is conſtantly under the Direction and Government of the ſame wiſe, good, and almighty Being which created it! *The Lord reigneth, let the Earth rejoice, let the Multitude of the Iſles be glad thereof.* Pſ. xcvii. 1. *Say among the Heathen, that the Lord reigneth; the World alſo ſhall be eſtabliſhed, that it ſhall not be moved; he ſhall judge the People righteouſly.* Pſ. xcvi. 10.

How unworthy therefore were they of the Name of Philoſophers and wiſe Men, who denied Providence under Pretence of conſulting the Tranquillity and Happineſs of Mankind! Such were *Epicurus* and his Followers. If all Things were left to a blind Chance, without a ſupreme Director; or to what the Heathens called *Fortune*, a giddy capricious Thing, without Reaſon or any certain Rules of proceeding; what could be expected but wild Confuſion and Diſorder, endleſs Uncertainty, and lawleſs Anarchy! He that looketh upon Things in this View hath nothing certain to depend upon, and muſt live in a perpetual Fluctuation and Perplexity of Mind: Whereas to conſider that all Things are under the Superintendency of an infinitely wiſe and benign preſiding Mind lays the beſt Foundation for a ſolid Tranquillity and a noble Confidence. He that lives from Day to Day under the Influence of this Perſuaſion hath Joys which others are unacpuainted with. And as, with Regard to the univerſal Adminiſtration of Things, he rejoiceth in the Belief that they are excellently ordered upon the Whole; ſo, with Regard to his own particular Caſe, he is ſatisfied that nothing befalls him but under God's wiſe and kind Direction, and that

all Things ſhall be made to work together for his real Benefit. And, finally, he carrieth his Views beyond this preſent tranſitory Scene to a future State of Retributions. He conſiders that this Life is not the Whole of Man's Exiſtence, but is only the firſt Part of it; that it is deſigned to be a State of Trial and Diſcipline, and not of final Recompence; and therefore it is not to be wondered at, if there be ſeveral Things in the preſent Diſpenſations of Providence which we find it hard to account for. And therefore he looks forward with unſpeakable Satisfaction to that great Day, when all the amazing Difficulties, the ſeeming Irregularities and Inconſiſtencies, in the preſent Methods of the Divine Diſpenſations, ſhall be fully cleared, and the admirable Scheme of Providence ſhall be placed in a fair and beautiful Light, and God's moſt wiſe Deſigns towards Mankind brought to their everlaſting glorious Iſſues.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of our Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt.

DISCOURSE V.

ROMANS v. 11.

—*We joy in God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt.—

TO conſider the Works of God, as exhibiting the Diſplays of his Glory and Perfection, is not only a very uſeful but a delightful Employment. This hath been already ſhewn with Regard to the Works of Creation and Providence, the Contemplation of which yields a pure and noble Delight to a rational and well-diſpoſed Mind. Let us now take a View of the wonderful Work of our Redemption and Salvation by *Jeſus Chriſt*, in which the Glory of God is illuſtriouſly

illuſtriouſly manifeſted, and which, if duly conſidered, hath a Tendency to fill the Heart with holy Admiration, Love, and Joy. This is what the Apoſtle here ſignifies, when he ſaith, *We joy in God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *by whom we have received the Atonement.* And elſewhere he gives it, as the Character of real *Chriſtians*, that *they worſhip God in the Spirit, and rejoice in* Chriſt Jeſus. *Phil.* iii. 3. And St. *Peter*, writing to thoſe who made an open Profeſſion of their Faith in *Jeſus Chriſt* in the Face of many Difficulties and Dangers, expreſſeth himſelf thus: *Whom having not ſeen ye love, and in whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory.* 1 Pet. i. 8. Good Men under the Old Teſtament *rejoiced* in the Proſpect they had of the Saviour which was to come. Thus did that great Patriarch *Abraham*, concerning whom our Lord declares to the *Jews*, *Your Father* Abraham *rejoiced to ſee my Day; and he ſaw it, and was glad.* John viii. 56. But we, who live after *Chriſt*'s actual *Manifeſtation in the Fleſh*, have in this Reſpect a vaſt Advantage above thoſe that lived under any former Diſpenſation. The original Word εὐαγγέλιον, which we render *Goſpel*, properly ſignifieth *good Tidings*; and it is fitly ſo called,

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as it bringeth the beſt, the happieſt Tidings that were ever publiſhed to the World: *Theſe Things write we unto you*, ſaith the Apoſtle *John*, *that your Joy may be full.* 1 *John* i. 4. Hither therefore let us turn our Meditations for a While, and ſee what there is in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and in the admirable Methods of our Redemption through him, which may lay a juſt Foundation for the ſpiritual Joy, and tend to heighten the Pleaſures of a religious Life.

The amiable and glorious Character, under which *Chriſt* is generally repreſented in the New Teſtament, is that of *the Saviour, our Lord and Saviour* Jeſus Chriſt. And juſtly is he ſo called, inaſmuch as, according to the Repreſentation made to us in the Goſpel, it is through him that the moſt ineſtimable Benefits are communicated to Sinners of the human Race; through him they are pardoned, juſtified, and ſaved: And he is expreſsly ſaid to be *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* Heb. v. 9. He is alſo deſcribed to us under the Character of *the Mediator.* We are expreſsly aſſured, that, as *there is one God, ſo there is one Mediator between God and Man*, and that *Jeſus Chriſt* is he. 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. And he is elſewhere called *the Mediator of the New Covenant.*

Heb.

Heb. xii. 24. What is included in the Idea of *the Mediator* is only to be known by the Light which the Scripture affordeth us, this being a Doctrine of pure Revelation. And, according to the Account there given us, it is by Means of the Mediator that the holy Majesty of Heaven seeth fit to carry on the Designs of his Mercy towards sinful Creatures of the human Race, for *reconciling them to himself*, and recovering them from the Miseries and Ruins they had brought upon themselves by their Apostacy and Disobedience; so that in this View the Character of the *Saviour*, and of *the Mediator between God and Man*, comes in Effect to the same Thing. This Constitution of the Mediator is not to be understood, as if God was not, of himself, mercifully disposed towards us, or willing to be reconciled to his offending Creatures. On the Contrary, it was, because he had the kindest Intentions towards us, and was determined to shew us Favour in a Way worthy of himself, that he hath appointed a Mediator, through whom he would deal with us upon the Terms of a gracious Covenant, and communicate to us the Blessings of his Grace. It is an Expedient devised by his infinite Wisdom and Love for transacting with his guilty Creatures, and dispensing his Favour

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and Benefits to them in ſuch a Way as is moſt for his own Glory, and for their Advantage and Comfort. By this Method God hath provided for maintaining and ſecuring the Honour of his ſovereign Majeſty, and the Dignity and Authority of his Government and Laws. This Conſtitution tendeth to impreſs upon our Minds a juſt and awful Senſe of his glorious Greatneſs and ſpotleſs Purity, and a moſt humbling Conviction of our own Guilt and Unworthineſs, in that he would not receive ſuch ſinful Creatures to his Grace and Favour, but through the Intervention of a Mediator of the higheſt Worth and Dignity, and in Conſideration of his moſt perfect meritorious Obedience and Sufferings on our Behalf. And, on the other Hand, by this Method God hath almoſt effectually provided for the Benefit and Comfort of the Sinners themſelves, and for diſpelling their guilty Jealouſies and Fears. It is no eaſy Matter to aſſure the Hearts of Creatures, that have a juſt Senſe of the great Evil and Malignity of Sin, and are conſcious of manifold Tranſgreſſions of the Divine Law, that a God of unchangeable Righteouſneſs and Purity, the wiſe and holy Governor of the World, will not only pardon all their Iniquities, though they have been attended with heinous Aggravations;

gravations; but will receive them to his ſpecial Grace and Favour, and reward even their imperfect Obedience, mixed with many Failures and Defects, with eternal Glory and Felicity.—But, when it is conſidered that for this Purpoſe God hath himſelf been pleaſed to ſend his own Son into the World, and hath appointed him *to make Atonement for our Sins*, and to fulfil the Office of a Mediator for us, this hath a happy Tendency to remove our Doubts, and to inſpire an ingenuous Hope and Confidence, and giveth us the higheſt poſſible Aſſurance of his wonderful Love and Grace towards us.

But, that we may the better judge of the Wiſdom and Propriety of this Conſtitution, it will be proper to conſider the Repreſentation the Scripture makes to us of the State of the human Race, and on the Account of which they ſtood in great Need of a Mediator and Saviour. It is there declared, that *all had ſinned and come ſhort of the Glory of God.* They were all chargeable with manifold Tranſgreſſions of his holy and righteous Law, ſo that, *if God ſhould enter into Judgment with them, no Fleſh could be juſtified in his Sight. The whole World was become guilty before God,* ὑπόδικος τῷ Θεῷ, obnoxious to the Judgment of God, and to the

the Sentence of his violated Law. *Rom.* iii. 19, 20, 23. They were all in a State of *Condemnation*, and *under the Curſe*. Their State is fitly repreſented by our Lord in one Word: They were *loſt*, *Matt.* xviii. 11. *Luke* xix. 10. *loſt* to the principal noble End of their Being, and to the Happineſs and Perfection for which they were originally deſigned. And St. *Paul* ſignifieth the ſame Thing by that emphatical Expreſſion, that they were all *dead: If one died for all*, ſaith he, *then were all dead*. 2 *Cor.* v. 14. And he elſewhere obſerves, that *they were without Strength*, Rom. v. 6. utterly unable to ſave or deliver themſelves out of that wretched and ſinful State into which they had fallen. Thus Man, the chief Inhabitant of this Part of the Syſtem, inſtead of ſhewing forth the Praiſes and Virtues of his Creator, had diſhonoured and diſobeyed him: So that a Cloud ſeemed to be caſt over the Glory of God's moral Government and Excellencies here below. *The Work of our Redemption* is to be underſtood of the Method fixed upon by the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs for recovering Men from their ſinful periſhing State to Holineſs and Happineſs, and raiſing them to eternal Glory and Felicity.

This moſt wiſe and benevolent Deſign the Scripture nobly repreſents as having

been originally formed in *the Divine Counſels before the Foundation of the World.* He to whoſe omniſcient Eye all Things are preſent from the Beginning, and who perfectly foreſaw the corrupt and miſerable State into which Mankind would fall by their Sins and Diſobedience, did in the Counſels of his eternal Wiſdom and Grace lay the glorious Plan of our Redemption and Salvation, and appointed his own Son, the Object of his infinite Delight, for undertaking and accompliſhing it. This is ſignified by St. *Peter*, when, ſpeaking of our being *redeemed by the precious Blood of* Chriſt, *as of a Lamb without Blemiſh and without Spot*, he ſaith, that *he verily was fore-ordained, i. e.* fore-appointed to this great Work, *before the Foundation of the World.* 1 Pet. i. 20, 21. And St. *Paul* obſerves, that *God hath choſen us in* Chriſt, *before the Foundation of the World.* Eph. i. 4. And that *he hath ſaved us and called us with an holy Calling, according to his own Purpoſe and Grace, which was given us in* Chriſt Jeſus *before the World began.* 2 Tim. i. 9.

Accordingly this ſeems to have been the great Thing which the Divine Wiſdom had all along in View. And though the glorious Perſon, who was deſigned in God's everlaſting Counſels to the Work of Saving and

Redeeming

Redeeming Mankind, did not actually take upon him human Flesh, till *the Fulness of the Time was come* appointed for that Purpose; yet it is reasonable to believe, that the most benevolent *Lord and Father of all* had a Regard to *Christ*'s future Undertaking, and to what he was to do and suffer in Pursuance of it, in his gracious Dealings towards Mankind from the Beginning. No sooner had our unhappy first Parents by their Transgression and Disobedience brought Sin and Death into the World, but it pleased God in his great Goodness to give them Intimations of his Grace and Mercy, and of *the great Redeemer that was to come*. And from that Time the gracious Covenant, of which he was the Mediator, was virtually in Force, and good Men were pardoned and accepted according to the merciful Terms of it. Afterwards, in the successive Ages of the Church, the Saviour, who had been promised from the Beginning, was variously prefigured and foretold *at sundry Times and in divers Manners*. He was described by many remarkable Characters, that, when he actually came, he might be more easily and certainly known and distinguished. The Nation, yea the Tribe and Family from which he was to spring *according to the Flesh*, the Town where he was to be born,

and the Time of his appearing to the World, were distinctly marked out by the antient Prophets, *those holy Men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* They testified before-hand the salutary End and Design of his Coming, and the important Offices he was to sustain; they spoke of his Dignity and Glory in the most exalted Terms, and yet represented him as descending to the lowest Depths of Humiliation and Suffering. He was foretold and pointed out to the Faith and Hope of *the People of God*, under the Character of *a great Prophet and heavenly Teacher*, to whom they were to hearken; under that of *a Priest, who should make his Soul an Offering for Sin, and who should make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and should make Intercession for the Transgressors*; and of *a glorious King* invested with a Divine Authority and universal Dominion. Finally, It was signified that his Coming should be Matter of *great Joy*; that he should be a Blessing to Mankind, *a Light to lighten the* Gentiles. *and the Salvation of God unto the Ends of the Earth.* Thus it pleased God in his great Wisdom to prepare the Way for the Redeemer's Coming by a Series of illustrious Prophecies, which had been delivered through a long Succession of Ages, and at a great Distance of Time

Time from one another. The Writings, in which theſe Predictions are contained, were undeniably publiſhed ſeveral Ages before *Chriſt*'s Appearing and Taking upon him human Fleſh. And it is a noble Contemplation, and which cannot but fill the Heart of a ſincere *Chriſtian* with Admiration and Joy, to obſerve how wonderfully they were fulfilled and accompliſhed. In him, and in no other, the ſeveral Characters by which the Saviour that was to come had been deſcribed, ſome of which ſeemed at firſt View to be inconſiſtent with others, concurred with a ſurpriſing Harmony; which yielded him a peculiar Kind of Atteſtation, that was never equalled in any other Caſe. At the Time which had been pointed out in the antient Prophecies, and which was in itſelf the fitteſt, he made his actual Appearance in the World. It has been thought ſtrange, that the Saviour, whoſe Coming was of ſuch vaſt Importance to Mankind, was not manifeſted many Ages ſooner; and this has been urged as a mighty Objection. But, if the Matter be rightly conſidered, it will be found that no Age was more proper for his Appearing than that in which he actually came. If he had appeared in the earlier Ages of the World, beſides that he would have wanted the Atteſtation ariſing from the remarkable

Series of Prophecies which I have mentioned, it would have been pretended that he came in the fabulous and barbarous Ages, when the Nations were rude and illiterate, and had not been as yet cultivated by Learning and Philoſophy, and might therefore have been eaſily impoſed upon: Nor could any Streſs be laid upon Facts of ſo extraordinary a Nature, ſaid to have been done in the Obſcurity of thoſe diſtant Ages. But now there is no juſt Ground for ſuch Objections: The Time when our Saviour appeared was not an illiterate and barbarous Age, but of great Knowledge and Refinement; the liberal Arts and Sciences had made a mighty Progreſs among the Nations; Philoſophy had been tried in all it's Forms; and the Arts of Reaſoning encouraged and cultivated to a great Degree; and at the ſame Time the State of the World was ſuch as rendered the Coming of the great promiſed Redeemer particularly needful and ſeaſonable.

The *Gentiles* were univerſally fallen from the right Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God, and adored a Multiplicity of Idol-deities: *They changed the Glory of the incorruptible God into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds, and four-footed Beaſts, and creeping Things; and wor-*

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ſhipped and ſerved the Creature more than the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever. Rom. i. 23, 25. What paſſed for Religion among them, and which was eſtabliſhed by their Laws, and interwoven into all their Syſtems of Policy, was an abſurd Polytheiſm and Idolatry. And even their wiſe Men and Philoſophers, inſtead of reclaiming them from their idolatrous Superſtition, countenanced it by their Maxims, and fell in with it in their Practice. They were at the ſame Time ſunk into the moſt monſtrous Depravity and Corruption of Manners; of which St. *Paul* gives a moſt ſtriking Deſcription, *Rom.* i. 26—32. And, as to the *Jews*, the only People among whom the Knowledge and Worſhip of the true God free from Idolatry were preſerved, ſome of them, as the *Sadducees*, denied a future State; others, as the *Phariſees*, the moſt applauded Sect among them, turned Religion into a mere outward Form and Shew, to the Neglect of real ſubſtantial Piety and Virtue; and by their corrupt Gloſſes perverted the true Deſign of the moral Law, and *made it of no Effect by their Traditions.* They had alſo, for the moſt Part, loſt and perverted the true Senſe and Meaning of the antient Prophecies relating to that great Saviour whom they profeſſed to expect. Inſtead of ſpiri-

tual Bleſſings, and a ſpiritual Salvation, they had their Hearts wholly fixed upon worldly Enjoyments and Advantages, which they truſted he would procure for them in the higheſt Degree; and that he would bring all other Nations into Subjection to them. And it appears from their own Hiſtorian *Joſephus*, that the People in general were become exceedingly corrupt in their Practice. It might therefore be ſaid, as St. *John* repreſents it, that *the whole World lay in Wickedneſs*. 1 John v. 19. The true Senſe of Religion ſeemed to be in Effect loſt among Men: And the State of Things was continually growing worſe and worſe, nor was there any Proſpect of recovering from it without an extraordinary Interpoſition of Heaven.

At this Time and in theſe Circumſtances it was, that the wonderful Perſon, who had been ſo long promiſed and foretold, made his actual Appearance in the World. And the Deſign of his Coming is thus repreſented by himſelf, and by thoſe that publiſhed the Goſpel in his Name, and under the Direction of his Spirit: That *he was the Light of the World, and came to give Light to them that ſat in Darkneſs, and in the Shadow of Death; and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light*: That *he came to ſeek and to*

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ſave that which was loſt: That whoſoever *believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but ſhould have everlaſting Life:* That he was ſent to *bleſs us in turning us away from our Iniquities, and to proclaim Deliverance to the Captives*; that, being freed from their miſerable Bondage to Sin and *Satan*, they might be made Partakers of *the glorious Liberty of the Children of God:* That *he came to give his Life a Ranſom for many, and to ſhed his Blood for the Remiſſion of Sins*, and to bring us out of a State of *Condemnation and Wrath* into a State *of Peace and Reconciliation with God:* Finally, *For this Purpoſe the Son of God was manifeſted that he might deſtroy the Works of the Devil, and be the Author of a glorious Reſurrection and eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.*

This is a general Account of the ſalutary Deſign of *Chriſt*'s Coming into the World; which muſt therefore fill the Heart of a good Man with a ſincere and ſolid Joy. Juſtly did the Angel declare, when he publiſhed the Redeemer's Birth, *Behold, I bring you good Tidings of great Joy, which ſhall be to all People; for unto you is born a Saviour, which is* Chriſt *the Lord; and with the Angel there was a Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt, praiſing God, and ſaying, Glory to God in the higheſt, on Earth Peace, Good-*

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will towards Men. Luke ii. 10, 11, 13, 14. Surely then it becomes us of the human Race *to rejoice*, who are more nearly concerned; and this is what I propoſe diſtinctly to ſhew in the farther Proſecution of this Subject.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of our Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt.

DISCOURSE VI.

ROMANS V. 11.

We joy in God through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *by whom we have received the Atonement.*

THE Redemption of Mankind by *Jeſus Chriſt* is a glorious Subject for our Thoughts, and exhibiteth ſuch marvellous Diſplays of the Divine Wiſdom, Grace, and Love, as tend to excite in the believing Soul the higheſt Emotions of Joy and Admiration. It was obſerved in the preceding Diſcourſe, that, according to the Repreſentation made to us in Scripture, the wiſe and benevolent Scheme

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was laid in God's *everlaſting Counſel, before the Foundation of the World,* and the glorious Perſon fixed upon who was to accompliſh it: That he was promiſed from the Beginning, and was all along variouſly prefigured and foretold in the ſucceſſive Ages of the Church, *till the Fulneſs of the Time came* which was appointed by the Divine Wiſdom for his actual Appearance among Men; and that, at the Time of his Coming, the State of the World, both with Regard to *Jews* and *Gentiles,* was remarkably ſuch as ſhewed the great Need they ſtood in of a Saviour.

Let us now proceed more diſtinctly to conſider the ſeveral Steps that were taken, in order to the carrying on and accompliſhing the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation.

And here the firſt Thing to be conſidered is *Chriſt*'s wonderful Incarnation, or *Taking upon him human Fleſh.* He who was *the only begotten Son of God,* the Son of God not merely in that Senſe in which Angels and Men are ſometimes ſo called, but in a moſt peculiar and tranſcendent Senſe, in which, as the ſacred Writer to the *Hebrews* obſerves, that Character could not be attributed to the higheſt Angels,

Angels. *Heb.* i. 4, 5. that Divine *Logos* or *Word, which was in the Beginning with God, and was God, by whom all Things were made, and without whom was not any Thing made that was made:* He it was that at the appointed Time *was made Fleſh, and dwelt among us.* Joh. i. 1, 3, 14. *He was made Fleſh*, not by a real Converſion or Tranſmutation of his Divine Nature into human Fleſh, which it were very abſurd to ſuppoſe; but by an Aſſumption of the human Nature into a near Union with his Divine, which is very wonderful indeed, but can never be proved to be impoſſible or to imply a Contradiction. The Words *Fleſh* and *Man* are often uſed in Scripture as equivalent Terms: And the Manner of Expreſſion ſeems here deſigned to ſignify, that *Chriſt* became truly and properly Man; that he aſſumed the human Nature in Reality, and not in Appearance only; and that he took it in it's preſent frail and mortal State, with the Weakneſſes and Infirmities to which it is now ſubject, *though without Sin: Foraſmuch as the Children are Partakers of Fleſh and Blood, he himſelf likewiſe took Part of the ſame.* Heb. ii. 14. And in Conſequence of this he *dwelt* or *tabernacled* among us. He lived and converſed ſeveral

veral Years together here on Earth, not in the Pomp and Splendor of worldly Glory and Magnificence, but in a mean and low Condition: *He took upon him the Form of a Servant*, as St. *Paul* expreſſeth it; though at the ſame Time on many Occaſions the Rays of a Divine Majeſty ſhone forth through *the Vail of his Fleſh*; ſo that they, who attentively obſerved him, *beheld his Glory, the Glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of Grace and Truth.* Joh. i. 14. This Incarnation of the Son of God, taken in all it's Circumſtances, was the moſt extraordinary Event that ever the World ſaw, the moſt amazing in itſelf, and the moſt beneficial in its Conſequences. The more we conſider it, the greater Matter we ſhall find for delightful Aſtoniſhment. In this Conſtitution, the Wiſdom of God, as well as his Goodneſs and Love to Mankind, is eminently conſpicuous: For by this it appeareth, that the great appointed Saviour is every Way qualified for accompliſhing the important Work upon which he was ſent, admirably fitted to ſuſtain the Office and Character of Mediator between the offended Majeſty of Heaven and guilty Creatures of the human Race. On the one Hand, he is a

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Perſon of infinite Dignity, *the only begotten of the Father, in whom he is always well pleaſed*; On the other Hand, he is intimately united to us, and of great Tenderneſs towards us, as being *Partaker of our Fleſh and Blood.* His being really Man fitted him for teaching and inſtructing us in a Way ſuited to our Capacities, and for being a proper Example and Pattern for us to imitate. It qualified him for the Obedience he yielded, and for the Sufferings he endured on our Behalf, and rendered him both capable of dying for us, and of being raiſed from the Dead, and thereby exhibiting a viſible Proof and Pledge of our own Reſurrection to immortal Bliſs. It fitted him for being a proper *High Prieſt for us, touched with a Feeling of our Infirmities*; and for appearing as an Advocate and Interceſſor on our Behalf in *the heavenly Sanctuary.* And, finally, this rendereth his Exaltation a Source of Conſolation and Joy: For what a Comfort muſt it be to reflect, that he who aſſumed our Nature, and is therefore ſo nearly related to us, *is now exalted at the right Hand of the Majeſty on high, and is made Head over all Things to his Church*; that he hath an univerſal Kingdom and Sovereignty committed

mitted to him, and ſhall at length be our final Judge! Juſtly therefore doth the Apoſtle lay a ſpecial Emphaſis upon this, that, as *there is one God, ſo there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man* Chriſt Jeſus. 1 *Tim.* ii. 5. becauſe, if he were not truly and properly Man, he could not be ſuch a Mediator as our Caſe required. But, on the other Hand, his being not a mere dignified Man, but *the eternal Son of God, the Brightneſs of the Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon, in whom dwelleth all the Fulneſs of the Godhead bodily*, gives us the higheſt Aſſurance of his being able to accompliſh the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation. It is this that deriveth a mighty Weight and Authority to the Inſtructions he hath given, and the Laws he hath preſcribed, and adds a wonderful Force and Beauty to the Example he hath ſet before us. This gives an unparalleled Merit and Dignity to his Obedience, and the Sacrifice he has offered on our Behalf, and renders his Mediation and Interceſſion of the higheſt Efficacy and Prevalency. It is this that qualifies him for his univerſal Headſhip, and for exerciſing a glorious Sovereignty over Angels and Men, for raiſing the Dead and judging the World.

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In Sum, it is this which rendereth him a proper Object of our Confidence and Truſt, a complete and all-ſufficient Saviour, able to fulfil his own glorious Promiſes, and to be *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* What a ſtable Foundation for *Rejoicing* is this, that we have ſuch a Mediator provided for us, who hath the Power and Sufficiency of God in Conjunction with the Tenderneſs and Compaſſions of the human Nature!

From this general Conſideration of the Incarnation of the Son of God, let us proceed more particularly to conſider what he hath done in Conſequence of it, for carrying on the glorious Work of our Redemption, and for diſcharging the Office of Mediator and Saviour.

And, Firſt, One important Part of the Office committed to him was to be the great Interpreter of the Will of God to Mankind, and to bring a clear Revelation from Heaven *in the Father's Name*, for inſtructing Men in thoſe Things which it moſt nearly concerneth them to know, and which are of the utmoſt Moment to their Duty and Happineſs. It may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that to this great Mediator were principally owing the Diſ-

coveries which were made of the Divine Will to Mankind from the Beginning. St. *Peter* intimates, that it was by *the Spirit of* Chriſt that the Prophets and holy Men of God of old were inſpired. 1 *Pet.* i. 2. And it was a Notion which generally obtained in the ancient *Chriſtian* Church, and which probably was derived from the Apoſtolical Age, that, in the Divine Appearances under the Old Teſtament, the *Logos*, who was *in the Fulneſs of Time* to aſſume human Fleſh, had a ſpecial Concernment. But it was after his actual Incarnation, that he moſt fully executed his Office as *the great heavenly Teacher*. He then brought the moſt perfect Revelation that was ever given to Mankind: And accordingly he declared concerning himſelf, *I am the Light of the World; he that followeth me ſhall not walk in Darkneſs, but ſhall have the Light of Life.* Joh. viii. 12. *He went about, in the Days of his Fleſh, teaching and preaching the Things of the Kingdom of God.* He inſtructed Men in the Nature of true Religion, and taught them to form the moſt juſt and worthy Notions of God, and of his incomparable Perfections, eſpecially of his moral Attributes, his Righteouſneſs, and Goodneſs, and Purity; and to *worſhip him* who is an in-

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finite *Spirit in Spirit and in Truth.* He ſet their Duty before them in it's juſt Extent, and in the faireſt Light, and gave them the moſt holy and excellent Laws and Precepts, exhibiting the moſt perfect Scheme of pure and refined Morality, yet without running into Extremes, that was ever publiſhed to the World. *Life and Immortality was by him brought into* the moſt clear and open *Light*; and, what eſpecially calleth for our higheſt Thankfulneſs, he opened the glorious *Counſels of God* for our Salvation, and, *in the Name of his heavenly Father*, the ſovereign Lord of the Univerſe, made a Publication of his free Grace and pardoning Mercy towards periſhing Sinners of the human Race, and of the gracious Terms upon which he is willing to receive them to his Favour, and beſtow upon them the moſt ineſtimable Benefits. The great Deſign of his perſonal Miniſtry was, as he himſelf repreſented it, *to call Sinners to Repentance*, to engage them to forſake their evil Ways, to be reconciled unto God, and to lay hold of his offered Mercy and Salvation. This was what he urged upon them in the tendereſt and moſt affectionate Manner, and by Motives the moſt proper to work upon reaſonable Beings. Thus did the incarnate Son of God admi-

rably fulfil the Part of a *Mediator between God and Man*, not only by bringing the kindeſt Meſſages from God to ſinful Men, and offering Grace and Mercy to them from him upon their penitent Return; but by doing all that was proper for him to do to engage them to a hearty Compliance with the gracious Propoſals made to them, *in the Father's Name*. He endeavoured by all the Charms of Love and Goodneſs to overcome their Obſtinacy. With this View he ſet his own Divine Character before them, and invited them to come to him as the appointed Saviour, and through him to return to *the Father of Mercies*, by an humble Faith, a ſincere Repentance, and new Obedience. He gave the moſt ſatisfying Aſſurances, and made the moſt engaging Repreſentations of the everlaſting Glory and Felicity, *which God hath prepared for them that obey him*, and accept his offered Salvation. And on the other Hand, he let them know the juſt Puniſhment which ſhould be inflicted upon thoſe who ſhould obſtinately reject the Divine Mercy, and perſiſt in a Courſe of preſumptuous Sin and Diſobedience. And ſurely nothing could be of greater Advantage to Mankind, or have a more manifeſt Tendency to recover them from the corrupt and wretched

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State into which they were fallen, than to have theſe important Diſcoveries made to them by a Perſon of ſuch infinite Dignity: For who ſo proper, ſo well qualified to inſtruct us in the Things concerning God and our eternal Salvation, and to give us the fulleſt Aſſurances of his kind Intentions, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace towards us, as he who is deſcribed to us as *the Word and Wiſdom of the Father, his only begotten Son, full of Grace and Truth!* The Revelations and Meſſages he brings, *in the Name of God*, muſt come with a peculiar Weight and Authority, when made known to us by one who muſt be ſuppoſed to be perfectly acquainted with the Divine Will. We are told, that *no Man hath ſeen God at any Time; the only begotten Son, which is in the Boſom of the Father, he hath declared him.* Joh. i. 18. And, to render his Inſtructions more familiar, *he appeared in human Fleſh*, whereby he was fitted for converſing with Men and accommodating himſelf to the Weakneſs and Infirmity of our Nature. This was one valuable End of his Incarnation, as the Apoſtle ſignifieth, when he ſaith, that *God who at ſundry Times and in divers Manners ſpake unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in theſe laſt Days ſpoken unto us by his Son.* Heb.

i. 1, 2. And not only did he inſtruct Men during his own perſonal Miniſtry here on Earth, but, after he was riſen from the Dead, and was no longer to dwell and converſe with them as before with Regard to his bodily Preſence, he commiſſioned his Apoſtles, and aſſiſted them by his Spirit, to *go into all the World, and to preach the Goſpel to every Creature*, *i. e.* to publiſh among the Nations the *glad Tidings* of Pardon and Salvation *in his Name*, and to reclaim them from their Idolatries, Vice, and Wickedneſs, to the Love and Obedience, the pure Worſhip and Service of God, and the Practice of true Holineſs. This Commiſſion the Apoſtles faithfully executed, *teaching them to obſerve all Things whatſoever he commanded them.* And both our Saviour's own admirable Diſcourſes *in the Days of his Fleſh*, and the Goſpel preached by his Apoſtles *in his Name*, and under the Direction of his Spirit, were committed to Writing; by which *Chriſt*, the great Teacher of his Church, and Mediator of the new Covenant, *ſtill ſpeaketh to us from Heaven.* Heb. xii. 25.

But, Secondly, in farther Purſuance of the great Deſign of our Salvation, the glorious Perſon, who was appointed to the Office and Character of a Saviour, exhibited the moſt

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perfect and lovely Example for our Imitation. In order to the recovering Men from their Corruption and Depravity, and reſtoring them to the Divine Favour and Image, it was proper not only to ſet before them a perfect Rule of Duty in the moſt pure and excellent Precepts, but alſo an Example of the moſt conſummate Holineſs and Virtue. This is what our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* hath fully done. The admirable Precepts he gave are beautifully exemplified in his own holy and unſpotted Life and Practice. Examples have actually a greater Force than bare Precepts, how excellent ſoever. And what Example can be more engaging than that of *the incarnate Son of God, the brighteſt Image* of the inviſible Deity? God, conſidered in his own infinite and incomprehenſible Eſſence, is inacceſſible to us frail Mortals, ſurrounded with dazzling Glory, which might be apt to overwhelm and aſtoniſh our feeble Natures: But in *Chriſt Jeſus*, his well beloved Son, become incarnate, his amiable Excellencies are brought nearer to our View, and within the Reach of our Imitation. This Example muſt needs, when duly attended to, have a mighty Influence upon us, as it is the Example of a Perſon of ſuch Divine Dignity, the great Saviour and Lover of our Natures,

who hath done and ſuffered ſo much for us, and to whom we are under ſuch infinite Obligations. In him we may behold the moſt perfect Pattern of univerſal Righteouſneſs and ſpotleſs Purity, of the moſt ardent Love to God and Zeal for the Divine Glory, of the moſt active and diſintereſted Benevolence towards Mankind, of the moſt admirable Self-denial, Meekneſs, Patience, and Reſignation, and in a Word of *whatſoever is juſt and pure, venerable and lovely, virtuous and praiſeworthy.* And it is certainly a wonderful Inſtance of the Divine Goodneſs, that God hath ſent his own Son to dwell amongſt Men, that he might ſhew us, in his own ſacred Life and Practice, what Kind of Temper and Conduct it it is that is moſt acceptable to the Deity, and by what Courſe of Action we ſhall beſt approve ourſelves in his Sight, and be raiſed to the neareſt Conformity to him. Who can expreſs the ſweet and powerful Attractions there muſt be in ſuch an Example as this, whereby Virtue and Holineſs is made viſible to our Eyes in it's moſt lovely Form, and it's nobleſt Degree of Excellence?

Thirdly, The true *Chriſtian rejoiceth in* Chriſt Jeſus, on the Account of the illuſtrious Miracles he performed, which were

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ſo many in Number, ſo glorious in their Nature, ſo beneficial in their Tendency, that in them *the Glory of God* was moſt eminently diſplayed. It cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed that God would ſend his Son into the World upon ſo important an Errand as the Redeeming and Saving Sinners the human Race, without ſufficient Credentials, which, if duly attended to, might have led Men to believe in him as in Reality the glorious and Divine Perſon which he declared himſelf to be. He appeared on Earth in mean outward Circumſtances, without the Riches, Grandeur, or Glory of this World. But he had a Glory of an higher Nature attending him, even *the wonderful Works* which he performed; many of which are particularly mentioned by the Evangeliſts, though they themſelves intimate, that it is only a ſmall Part of them which is recorded. *The Blind received their Sight*, withered and periſhing Limbs were reſtored at once, *the Lame were made to walk, and the Dumb and Deaf to hear and ſpeak*; *the Lepers were cleanſed*; great Numbers that were brought to him from all Parts, and who laboured under the moſt incurable and deſperate Diſeaſes, were healed, without failing in any one Inſtance; and *the Dead were raiſed to Life*: And all this

this by a ſovereign Word or Touch. With Authority he commanded even the unclean Spirits, and they obeyed him. Many of his Miracles were performed with an Air of Divine Sovereignty and Grandeur, becoming the Lord of Nature. He only ſaid to the ſtormy Wind and Tempeſt, and to the raging Sea, *Peace, be ſtill*; and the boiſterous Elements obeyed. He gave the powerful Word, *Lazarus, come forth*; and the dead Man, who had been four Days in the Grave, immediately aroſe. Twice did he feed ſeveral Thouſands, at once, with *a few Loaves and ſmall Fiſhes*. His Miracles were not merely Acts of ſupernatural Power, but of God-like Goodneſs and Compaſſion to the Bodies and Souls of Men; and they were done for the moſt Part in open View, in the Preſence of Multitudes, and even of his moſt obſtinate Enemies, thoſe who were moſt ſtrongly prejudiced againſt him. Juſtly therefore did he himſelf appeal to his *wonderful Works* as manifeſt Proofs that *he was in the Father, and the Father in him*. John xiv. 11. They were ſuch as became the Divinity in human Fleſh, and ſhewed that he really was what *the Voice from the magnificent Glory* declared him, *the beloved Son of God, in whom he was well*

well pleaſed. And, what eminently diſtinguiſhed him from all other Prophets and Workers of Miracles, he not only wrought the moſt marvellous Works in his own Perſon, but commiſſioned and inabled his Diſciples to perform Works of the ſame Kind *in his Name*, and by Power derived from him. Taking all theſe Things together, what an aſtoniſhing and delightful Scene openeth to our View! It ſhewed that ſomething was now carrying on of the higheſt Importance, far exceeding what the World had ever ſeen or known before. And the true *Chriſtian* cannot review all this without Wonder and Joy.

But, Fourthly, It is farther to be conſidered, that this moſt excellent Perſon, *the Son of God in human Fleſh*, ſubmitted, for our Sakes and in Obedience to his heavenly Father's Will, to the deepeſt Humiliations, the moſt dolorous Agonies and Paſſions, and even to *Death itſelf*, the cruel and ignominious *Death of the Croſs*. This, at firſt View, inſtead of furniſhing Matter of *Rejoicing*, may ſeem to be only fitted to produce Sorrow and Amazement. Nothing can poſſibly be more affecting than the Accounts given us by the Evangeliſts of our Saviour's laſt Sufferings, which were attended with whatſoever is moſt grievous

grievous and ſhocking to Nature. Behold him in his direful *Agony and bloody Sweat, his Soul exceeding ſorrowful even unto Death,* condemned as an Impoſtor and Blaſphemer, his Head crowned with piercing Thorns, his Body torn with bloody Stripes, hanging on the Croſs between two Thieves, treated with the greateſt Ignominy and Cruelty by Men, aſſaulted by the Powers of Darkneſs, and at length put to a moſt painful and accurſed Death: And then conſider who it was that ſuffered all this, *the Son of God* incarnate, the Divine *Immanuel,* who had *gone about doing Good* to the Bodies and to the Souls of Men; and that *he was delivered up to theſe Sufferings by the determinate Counſel and Fore-knowledge of God.* Acts ii. 23. *It pleaſed the Lord to bruiſe him, and to put him to Grief,* as the Prophet expreſſeth it, *Iſ.* liii. 10. When we conſider this, it is natural to inquire, what was the Cauſe and Deſign of ſo amazing a Tranſaction? Far be it from us to think that God, who delighteth not in the Pains and Sufferings of his Creatures, took Pleaſure in the grievous Sufferings of his perfectly innocent and well-beloved Son, in themſelves conſidered! But, as it ſeemed fit to the Divine Wiſdom, that, in order to our being par-

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doned, and raiſed from our periſhing guilty State to the Favour of God and eternal Happineſs, there ſhould be a Mediator of infinite Dignity to interpoſe on our Behalf; ſo alſo that this Mediator ſhould in our Nature and Stead ſubmit to the moſt grievous Sufferings, to make us deeply ſenſible what our Iniquities had deſerved, and to manifeſt God's juſt Diſpleaſure againſt Sin, and vindicate the Authority of his Government and Laws, even in the very Methods of our Reconciliation. Accordingly it is obſerved concerning *Chriſt* the Mediator, that *he was wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, and bruiſed for our Iniquities; the Chaſtiſement of our Peace was upon him, and by his Stripes we are healed.* Iſ. liii. 5. That *he ſuffered for Sins, the Juſt for the Unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God.* 1 Pet. iii. 18. and that *God made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. And *God's not ſparing his own Son, but thus delivering him up for us all,* is deſervedly inſiſted upon, in the New Teſtament, as exhibiting the moſt admirable Diſplay of the tranſcendent Greatneſs of his Love towards us. And at the ſame Time the Love of *Chriſt*, in freely *giving himſelf for us an Offering and a Sacrifice,*

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is juſtly celebrated as *a Love that paſſeth Knowledge*, and which hath a Height and Depth, a Length and Breadth in it, which we cannot fully comprehend.

And not only is *Chriſt*'s Suffering for us repreſented as a marvellous Inſtance and Proof of his Love to Mankind, but alſo of his Obedience to his heavenly Father. This is what St. *Paul* ſignifies when he ſaith, that Chriſt *became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs*. Phil. ii. 8. And our Saviour himſelf, ſpeaking of *his laying down his Life for us*, declares, that this *Commandment he had received from his Father*. John x. 13. And ſurely, when we conſider the Sufferings he endured in each amazing Circumſtance, compared with the Dignity of his Perſon; and that he voluntarily ſubmitted to all this, becauſe it was *the Father's Will* that he ſhould do ſo for the Redemption and Salvation of ſinful Men; we muſt acknowledge that never was there ſo aſtoniſhing a Self-denial, ſo profound a Reſignation, ſuch an abſolute unreſerved Submiſſion and Obedience to the Will of God, as well as ſuch a marvellous Inſtance of Goodneſs and Benevolence towards Mankind. By this Obedience of the Son of God in our Nature, as manifeſted in his laſt laſt Sufferings

ferings and Death, joined with the perfect Obedience of his whole holy and unſpotted Life, God and his Law were moſt ſignally honoured, which had been greatly diſhonoured by Man's Diſobedience. This rendered the Sacrifice he offered *of a ſweet-ſmelling Savour, i. e.* infinitely pleaſing to his heavenly Father. On the Account of this his moſt meritorious Obedience and Sufferings on our Behalf, he is ſaid to be *the Propitiation for our Sins*; and Pardon, Peace, and Salvation are repreſented as flowing to us through his Blood. To this the Apoſtle refers, when he ſaith, *We joy in God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *by whom we have received the Atonement.* His Blood is called by himſelf *the Blood of the New Teſtament*, or *Covenant*, *ſhed for the Remiſſion of Sins.* Matt. xxvi, 28. and, by St. *Paul*, *the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant.* Hebr. xiii. 20. It was a Conſideration of what he hath done and ſuffered for us, purſuant to the glorious Scheme laid in the Counſels of the Divine Wiſdom and Love for our Redemption, that the Covenant of Grace, in it's merciful Terms and *exceeding great and precious Promiſes*, is confirmed and eſtabliſhed, and the glorious Bleſſings of it have been communicated

municated from the Beginning, and ſhall be to the End of the World.

Other valuable Ends might be mentioned, which the Sufferings and Death of *Chriſt*, the Mediator and Saviour, were intended to anſwer: He thereby teſtified the Truth of the Doctrine he had taught, and *ſealed it with his Blood*; and eſpecially the Profeſſion he has made of his being *the Chriſt, the Son of the living God*. He alſo thereby ſhewed what ſevere Trials and Sufferings the moſt excellent Perſons may be expoſed to for the Cauſe of God, of Truth and Righteouſneſs; and gave an admirable Example of Conſtancy under ſuch Sufferings, and of the moſt perfect Patience and Meekneſs under the greateſt Injuries, as well as of an amiable forgiving Diſpoſition and Love even to his Enemies, for whom he prayed and interceded with his dying Breath. Finally, He died for us, that *by Death he might deſtroy him that had the Power of Death, that is, the Devil, and might deliver thoſe who, through Fear of Death, were all their Lifetime ſubject to Bondage*. Heb. ii. 14. By ſubmitting to the Stroke of Death he diſarmed it of it's *Sting*, and opened a Way for triumphing over it in his glorious Reſurrection. Thus, in whatſoever View

we

we conſider the Death of *Chriſt*, there is a Divine Glory in it. We may behold him *making Peace by the Blood of his Croſs*, and Light and Joy ſpringing up out of the Depths of his Agonies and Sorrows. Such are the many ſalutary Effects of his Paſſion, and the excellent Ends for which it was deſigned, that we muſt acknowledge it to be one of the moſt ſolemn and awful, yet one of the moſt pleaſing Scenes, which can be preſented to our Minds. *A crucified* Jeſus, *which was to the* Jews *a Stumbling-Block, and to the* Greeks *Fooliſhneſs*, is the worthy Object of the *Chriſtian*'s Glorying and Rejoicing. And we may juſtly ſay, with the Apoſtle, upon obſerving the admirable Diſplay of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs in this Part of the Goſpel Scheme, that *it became him, for whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings*. Heb. ii. 10.

On Delighting in the gracious Methods of our Redemption by Jesus Christ.

DISCOURSE VII.

ROMANS v. 11.

—We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ.—

IN our former Discourses on this Subject it was shewn, that our Lord *Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God,* at the Time appointed by the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, actually assumed human Flesh: That he brought the clearest and fullest Revelation of the Divine Will which was ever given to Mankind: That he also exhibited the most perfect Example of universal Holiness, Goodness, and Purity for our Imitation: That he per-

formed the moſt illuſtrious Miracles, Acts of Godlike Power and beneficent Goodneſs; and that he at length ſubmitted, for our Sakes and in Obedience to his heavenly Father's Will, to the moſt grievous Sufferings and to *Death itſelf*, that *he might make Atonement for our Sins, and might obtain eternal Redemption for us.* All theſe Things lay a juſt Foundation for *our Rejoicing in God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt.

The next Thing to be conſidered openeth to us a ſtill more glorious and delightful Scene, *viz.* *Chriſt's* Reſurrection from the Dead, and Aſcenſion into Heaven, and the Glories of his exalted State. It was neceſſary for wiſe and valuable Purpoſes that he ſhould ſuffer and die; but *he did not continue under the Power of Death: God hath raiſed him up*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *having looſed the Bands of Death, becauſe it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it.* Acts. ii. 24. The Reſurrection of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* is an Article of great Importance in the *Chriſtian* Scheme. It was what he himſelf had foretold, and appealed to as a moſt illuſtrious Confirmation of his Divine Miſſion, and of the Truth of that Character under which he appeared as *the Son of God, the Saviour*

Saviour of the World: He was declared, or *demonſtrated*, as St. *Paul* ſpeaks, *to be the Son of God with Power by his Reſurrection from the Dead.* Rom. i. 4. It was alſo an open Declaration of God's Acceptance of his Oblation and Sacrifice, and that he was infinitely well pleaſed with what *Chriſt* had done and ſuffered for the Redemption of the human Race. And, finally, it was a ſenſible Proof and Pledge of our Reſurrection to immortal Life. *Chriſt* had promiſed concerning thoſe that believe and obey him, that *he would raiſe them up at the laſt Day.* Joh. vi. 39, 40. And his Riſing himſelf from the Dead, according to his own Prediction, ſhewed that he is able to accompliſh this glorious Promiſe, and that it may be ſafely depended upon: *Now is* Chriſt *riſen from the Dead*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *and become the Firſt-fruits of them that ſlept*, 1 Cor. xv. 20. His Reſurrection is the Pledge of theirs, as the Firſt-fruits were of the following Harveſt. And again, *if we believe that* Jeſus *died, and roſe again, even ſo them alſo which ſleep in* Jeſus *will God bring with him, viz.* at his ſecond Coming. 1 *Theſſ.* iv. 14.

Chriſt, having ſhewed himſelf alive after his Paſſion by many infallible Proofs,

aſcended into Heaven, and *was received up into Glory*; he was taken up in his human Nature, in which he had deſcended to ſuch amazing Depths of Suffering and Abaſement, to Joy and Glory inexpreſſible. This is a raviſhing Contemplation! How ſhould it gladden our Hearts to conſider the Glories which *Chriſt*'s exalted Humanity is now inveſted with, as the Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings? For we are told, that, *becauſe he became obedient unto Death, even the Death of the Croſs; therefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a Name which is above every Name*, Phil. ii. 8, 9. Thus, in this admirable Saviour, we have both the moſt ſhining Example of holy unreſerved Obedience, and alſo the moſt eminent Proof and Specimen of the glorious Reward which ſhall attend it.

But we are not to regard *Chriſt*'s Exaltation and Glory merely as a Reward of his Obedience and Sufferings, but as neceſſary to his farther Diſcharge of his mediatorial Office. We muſt not imagine, that, upon his Entrance into Heaven, he left off intereſting himſelf for us of the human Race. He ſtill purſueth his glorious Deſign which he had undertaken for our Salvation; and there are two Things to

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be obſerved concerning the Exerciſe of his mediatorial Office in Heaven. The one is his Appearing in our Behalf as *our great High Prieſt, and making perpetual Interceſſion for us:* The other is his being inveſted with an univerſal Authority and Dominion as *the great King and Head over all Things to his Church.*

With Regard to the former it is obſerved by the ſacred Writer to the *Hebrews*, that *we have a great High Prieſt that is paſſed into the Heavens*, Jeſus *the Son of God.* Heb. iv. 14. It was neceſſary to the Fulfilling of his Prieſtly Office, that, as he had offered himſelf a Sacrifice for us upon the Croſs, ſo he ſhould make Interceſſion for us in the heavenly Sanctuary. And this Interceſſion is founded on his Atonement, and on the Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings. To this Purpoſe it is declared, that Chriſt, *being an High Prieſt of good Things to come, not by the Blood of Goats and Calves, but by his own Blood, entered in once into the holy Place, having obtained eternal Redemption for us. He is entered, not into the holy Places made with Hands, which are the Figures of the true, but into Heaven itſelf, now to appear in the Preſence of God for us.* Heb. ix. 11, 12, 24. And we are aſſured, that *he is*

able to ſave them to the uttermoſt thoſe that come unto God by him, ſeeing he ever liveth to make Interceſſion for us. Heb. vii. 25. The Manner of this his Interceſſion we are not able diſtinctly to explain, but it ſeems to be underſtood of a moſt prevalent and efficacious Interpoſition on our Behalf, whereby he procureth for us from his heavenly Father the moſt valuable Benefits, and commendeth our ſincere though imperfect Services to his gracious Acceptance. Accordingly we are expreſsly required to offer up our Prayers for the Bleſſings we ſtand in Need of in the Name of *Chriſt* the Mediator: Our *ſpiritual Sacrifices* are ſaid to be *acceptable to God by* Jeſus Chriſt. 1 *Pet.* ii. 5. And it is *through him that we have Acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.* Eph. ii. 18. And God's having appointed this Method of tranſacting with us through his Son hath a happy Tendency to diſpel our guilty Jealouſies and Fears, and gives us an encouraging Aſſurance that he will deal graciouſly and favourably with us? What a mighty Conſolation is it to Creatures conſcious of ſo many Sins and Defects, that *the Son of God,* who by the Divine Appointment took upon him human Fleſh, and did and ſuffered ſo much for us here

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on Earth, continueth, now that he is in the Height of his Exaltation and Glory, to mediate and intercede for us as our *great High Prieſt and Advocate with the Father*, and that we are allowed and commanded to come in his prevailing Name! The Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* juſtly draws this Concluſion from it: *Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in Time of Need.* Heb. iv. 14, 15, 16. Thus it appears, that *Chriſt*'s Prieſthood in Heaven, and his Interceſſion for us there, is a juſt Ground of *rejoicing in God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt.

But this Joy will be ſtill heightened, if we conſider that this great Mediator and Saviour is inveſted with an univerſal Authority and Dominion, the more effectually to fulfil the Ends of his mediatorial Undertaking, and accompliſh the glorious Work of our Salvation. To this Purpoſe St. *Paul* declares, *that God, having raiſed him from the Dead, hath ſet him at his own Right Hand in the heavenly Places, far above all Principality and Power, and Might, and Dominion, and every Name that is named, not only in this World, but alſo in that which is to come; and hath put all Things under his Feet, and gave him to be the Head*

over

over all Things to the Church. Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. His Dominion is of univerſal Extent, *Angels, Authorities, and Powers being made ſubject unto him.* 1 Pet. iii. 22. Thoſe glorious Beings are employed in ſerving the Intereſts of his Kingdom, and *are ſent forth by him as miniſtering Spirits, to miniſter for them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation.* Heb. i. 14. Thus it pleaſed God to order it, *that,* as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *in the Diſpenſation of the Fulneſs of the Time might be gathered together in one all Things in* Chriſt, *both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him.* Eph. i. 10. But *Chriſt* is in an eſpecial Manner the *Head of his Body the Church.* Col. i. 18. As ſuch, he hath preſcribed Laws, and inſtituted Ordinances to be obſerved in his Church throughout all Ages. Soon after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, he gave an illuſtrious Proof of his Exaltation and Glory, by pouring forth the Holy Spirit from on high in a plentiful Effuſion of his extraordinary Gifts and miraculous Powers upon the Apoſtles and firſt Publiſhers of the Goſpel, who were thereby admirably qualified for the important Work upon which they were ſent; and not only upon them, but upon great Numbers of thoſe who

who by their Miniſtry were converted to the Faith of *Chriſt*. Accompanied with ſuch glorious Evidences of a Divine Light and Power, the Religion of *Jeſus* ſoon made an amazing Progreſs, though it was deſtitute of all worldly Advantages, and had the moſt unſurmountable Difficulties to encounter with. The *Pagan* Superſtition and Idolatry fell before it. Thouſands were every-where *turned from Idols to ſerve the living and true God*; and vaſt Numbers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, in Oppoſition to their ſtrongeſt Prejudices, were brought over, in that very Age, to the Belief and Acknowledgment of *Jeſus* who hath been crucified, as their Saviour and Lord.

And not only did an exalted Saviour pour forth the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt in the firſt Ages of the *Chriſtian* Church, but he ſtill continneth to be the great Diſpenſer of ſpiritual Bleſſings and Benefits, and to communicate the ordinary gracious Influences of the Spirit. St. *Paul*'s uſual Salutation at the Beginning of his Epiſtles is this: *Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our Father, and from the Lord* Jeſus Chriſt; intimating that all Manner of ſpiritual Benefits are communicated to us from *God*

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the Father, as the ſupreme original Author; and from *Jeſus Chriſt*, as the immediate Diſpenſer of them. And he elſewhere ſaith, that *it hath pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all Fulneſs dwell*, Col. i. 19. *i. e.* a Fulneſs of Grace and of the Spirit: And accordingly St. *John* obſerveth, that *of his Fulneſs have all we received, and Grace for Grace.* John i. 16. And what a Comfort is it to be aſſured, that in *Chriſt*, the great Head of his Church and Mediator of the New Covenant, the Power of communicating all neceſſary Supplies of Grace is veſted by the ſovereign Appointment of the Father, for our Uſe and Benefit, for purifying and healing our diſtempered Souls, for aſſiſting our ſincere Endeavours in the Performance of our Duty, and forming us into a Meetneſs for the heavenly Glory! And to him it alſo belongeth to put us into the actual Poſſeſſion of that Glory, as he himſelf ſignifies in his laſt ſolemn Addreſs to his heavenly Father here on Earth, ſaying, *Thou haſt given him* (*i. e.* to thy Son) *Power over all Fleſh, that he ſhould give eternal Life to as many as thou haſt given him.* John xvii. 2. He will, upon their Departure out of this World, receive their ſeparated Spirits, and, finally,

to complete their Salvation, will raiſe their dead Bodies from the Grave at his ſecond glorious Appearing. And Nothing can be more aſtoniſhing and delightful than the Idea the Scripture gives us of it: He himſelf aſſures us, that *he ſhall then come in his own Glory, and in the Glory of his heavenly Father, and in the Glory of his holy Angels.* Luke ix. 26. Myriads of thoſe bleſſed Spirits ſhall then form his illuſtrious Train, attended with a Pomp and Splendor exceeding the utmoſt Flight of human Imagination: Then *all that are in their Graves ſhall hear his Voice, and ſhall come forth; they that have done Good unto the Reſurrection of Life, and they that have done Evil unto the Reſurrection of Damnation.* John v. 28, 29. *The Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of the Archangel, and with the Trump of God; and the Dead in* Chriſt *ſhall riſe firſt.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 16. They ſhall be *raiſed in Incorruption, Power, and Glory.* And how tranſporting is it to look forwards in the Views of Faith to that happy Time, when *this Corruptible ſhall put on Incorruption, and this Mortal ſhall put on Immortality, and Death ſhall be ſwallowed up in Victory!* 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. when Chriſt *ſhall change our vile Body, that it may*

may be fashioned like unto his own glorious Body, according to the Working whereby he is able even to subdue all Things unto himself. Phil. iii. 21. Then shall this great Mediator, who at his first Coming *took upon him the Form of a Servant*, and descended to the lowest Humiliations and Abasements, have the highest Honour put upon him before Heaven and Earth: For *he shall judge the World in the Father's Name*, and shall dispense eternal Retributions. This completes the glorious Scheme, and is ordered with great Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness: For it must needs give a mighty Force to his Laws, that to him we must be accountable for our Obedience or Disobedience to those Laws, and that he will himself have it in his Power to fulfil his own glorious Promises, and to execute his awful Threatenings. This tendeth to strike a just Terror into the obstinate Opposers of his Authority and Grace, and at the same Time is full of Consolation and Encouragement to the Upright and Sincere: For what can afford a more manifest Proof that we shall be dealt with, in that *great Day*, not according to the utmost Rigour of strict Justice, but with great Tenderness and Equity, and that all proper Allowances

shall

ſhall be made to our Infirmities, as far as they are conſiſtent with Sincerity, than that we are to be tried and judged by the moſt benevolent Saviour and Lover of our Natures? *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father*, will he then ſay to thoſe that loved and ſerved him in Truth and with an upright Heart, *inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World.* Then ſhall he preſent *the whole Church of the Firſt-born*, conſiſting of all the good Men that ever lived, from the Beginning of the World to the Conſummation of all Things; *he ſhall preſent them faultleſs to his heavenly Father with exceeding Joy*, and ſhall inſtate them in the unchangeable Poſſeſſion of a complete everlaſting Felicity. There ſhall they be aſſociated to *an innumerable Company of Angels*, with whom and with one another they ſhall enjoy the Pleaſures of the moſt perfect celeſtial Love and Harmony, and ſhall be for ever bleſſed with the immediate tranſforming Viſion of the Deity. Then ſhall *Chriſt* deliver up his mediatorial Kingdom to the Father, the great Ends of it being obtained, and *God ſhall be all in all.* All after that ſhall be one uninterrupted Scene of Bliſs and Glory, beyond what the Heart of Man can now conceive. Our Souls

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are loſt in the boundleſs Proſpect, ſwallowed up in ſacred Extaſy and Joy!

Thus we have endeavoured, though in a very imperfect Manner, to trace the great Work of our Redemption by *Jeſus Chriſt*, from it's glorious Original in God's eternal Counſels, through the ſeveral intermediate Steps of it's Accompliſhment, to the Conſummation of it at *Chriſt*'s ſecond Coming. And in every View it appeareth to be wonderful and glorious, wiſely adjuſted in all it's Parts, admirably directed and adapted to promote the moſt excellent Ends, the Glory of God, and the Happineſs of Mankind. There cannot be a more ſublime and finiſhed Idea of the Mediator than is here ſet before us. Every Thing is to be found on him that could be ſuppoſed to enter into the Character of a complete and all-ſufficient Saviour. What an admirable Harmony is there in all his ſacred Offices! What a wonderful Fitneſs and Congruity in every Part of his Undertaking! So that one would be apt to think, that every real Friend and Lover of Mankind ſhould at leaſt wiſh that this Scheme were true, and that there were ſuch a Mediator and Saviour provided for us, as the Goſpel repreſenteth *Jeſus Chriſt* to be. This *Mediator*

diator *is but one.* The ſame wonderful Perſon is both our divine Teacher, and our moſt perfect Example; our great High Prieſt, who offered himſelf a Sacrifice for us, and our Advocate and Interceſſor with the Father. *He is Head over all Things to his Church,* inveſted with an univerſal Authority and Dominion for our Benefit; and is the Diſpenſer of all ſpiritual and ſaving Bleſſings; and, to complete all, he ſhall be our final Judge, and ſhall then appear to be, in the fulleſt and moſt glorious Senſe, *the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him.* Thus ſhall the great Work be accompliſhed by the ſame Hand by which it was all along carried on *in the Father's Name.* If there were many Mediators, we might be at a Loſs, and diſtracted in our Thoughts which to apply to. Suſpicions might ariſe in our Minds, that none of them were ſufficient. Beſides, it would tend to introduce Confuſion in our Worſhip, and open a Way to Polytheiſm and Idolatry. The *Heathens* had a Multiplicity of Idol-Gods and Mediators, to whom they addreſſed their Worſhip, whilſt *the only living and true God* was in a great Meaſure neglected. But the Goſpel-Scheme is ſimple and uniform: As *there is but one God, ſo*

there is but one Mediator between God and Man. And this Mediator is of infinite Dignity, every Way ſufficient to anſwer all the Exigencies of our Caſe, *able to ſave to the uttermoſt all them that come unto God by him.* The ſtated Order of the Goſpel-Worſhip is this, that, through *Chriſt*, the great appointed Mediator, *we have Acceſs by one Spirit unto the Father.* In loving, obeying, and honouring the Mediator, we love, obey, and honour *the Father which ſent him*, and whoſe ſovereign Wiſdom, Grace, and Love are repreſented as the glorious Source of the whole Deſign. Far therefore from drawing off our Regards from God our heavenly Father, or intercepting that Love, Truſt, Adoration, and Obedience that is moſt juſtly due to him, (which is an Objection that hath been often urged againſt the Goſpel-Scheme of the Mediator) it rather heighteneth our Obligations to him, our Confidence in his Grace, and our Admiration of his Goodneſs, in that *he ſo loved the World as to ſend his Son to ſave and to redeem us.* As in the Mediatorial Scheme all is admirably contrived for our Benefit and Comfort; ſo all is ultimately referred *to the Glory of God the Father*, whoſe incomparable Perfections, his Wiſdom, his Righteouſneſs, and Holineſs, and

eſpecially

eſpecially his incomprehenſible Grace and Love, here ſhine forth with a moſt attractive Harmony and Beauty. What an admirable Method is this of dealing with ſinful Creatures! How becoming the Glory of his infinite Majeſty!

It is proper to obſerve, on this Occaſion, that the Methods of our Salvation through *Jeſus Chriſt* are *Things which the Angels deſire to look into*, as St. *Peter* aſſureth us, 1 Pet. i. 12. St. *Paul*, having ſaid, that *great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs, God was manifeſt in the Fleſh*, adds, that *he was ſeen of Angels*. 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Redeemer's Birth was celebrated with Hymns of Joy by *a whole Multitude of the heavenly Hoſt*. This exhibited a wonderful Spectacle to thoſe bleſſed Spirits, which could not but engage their Attention. With what Aſtoniſhment did they behold *the Son of God dwelling in human Fleſh*, doing and ſuffering ſo much on Earth for the Salvation of ſinful Men, offering himſelf to be *the Propitiation for the Sins of the World*, and afterwards aſcending with his riſen Body into Heaven, and *there appearing for us*, as our great High Prieſt, *in the heavenly Sanctuary*, and exerciſing an univerſal Sovereignty for carrying on the gracious Purpoſes of his Mediatorial King-

dom. The Apoſtle intimates, that *now unto the Principalities and Powers in heavenly Places is made known, by* or *in the Church, the manifold Wiſdom of God, viz.* as ſhining forth in the admirable Work of our Redemption. *Eph.* iii. 10. This is a Theme fit to employ ſeraphic Minds. The Glory of it is not confined to the narrow Bounds of our Earth, but ſpreads through thoſe boundleſs Realms of Light and Bliſs. And ſhould not we take a Pleaſure in exerciſing our Thoughts on that glorious Subject, which filleth the holy Angels with Wonder and Delight, and in which we are more nearly concerned than they!

How much therefore are thoſe in the Wrong, who repreſent the Goſpel as a mean and gloomy Scheme! It ſpeaketh Terror indeed to the obſtinately Impenitent and Diſobedient, who preſumptuouſly perſiſt in their vicious Courſes; and, if it ſpake Peace to ſuch Perſons, it would be a ſtrong Proof of it's Falſhood and evil Tendency. But to penitent Sinners, who are heartily willing to forſake their evil Ways, and apply themſelves in good Earneſt to the Practice of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, it gives the higheſt poſſible Comfort and Encouragement. It furniſheth the ſtrongeſt Aſſurance of God's Readineſs

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to pardon all their Tranſgreſſions, and to receive them into his Grace and Favour. It ſets their Duty before them in the moſt amiable and engaging Light, and promiſeth them the gracious Aids of the Holy Spirit to aſſiſt their Endeavours in the Performance of it, and that *God will give eternal Life* as the Reward of their ſincere though imperfect Obedience. In a Word, to good and upright Souls it opens all the Springs of Conſolation and Joy; it diſplays all the Charms of infinite Love, and preſents the moſt glorious and tranſporting Subjects to our Thoughts which can enter into the human Mind. It may therefore be juſtly ſaid, that Nothing can poſſibly repreſent God under a more amiable Idea than the Goſpel of *Jeſus*, or be better fitted to engage us to *delight ourſelves in him*. With what Thankfulneſs and Joy ſhould we then entertain the happy Diſcoveries! and purſue our Meditations till, with Hearts full of grateful Devotion, we join in that celeſtial Hymn of Praiſe, *Bleſſing, and Honour, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!*

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE VIII.

PSALM CXIX. 47.

I will delight myſelf in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

IT is the great Advantage of Religion, that it propoſeth the nobleſt Objects to our Contemplation which can poſſibly be preſented to the human Mind; the eternal and ſelf-exiſtent God, his glorious Attributes and Perfections, his wonderful Works of Creation and Providence, and the admirable Methods of our Redemption and Salvation by our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. Theſe Things not only tend to improve and elevate the Soul, but furniſh

niſh a divine Satisfaction and Delight. This appears from what hath been already offered upon this Subject. But Religion doth not conſiſt merely in the Knowledge and Contemplation of ſacred Truth, but in the Practice of thoſe Duties which are required of us in the Divine Law. And that this alſo is a Source of pure and rational *Delight* I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew. It muſt be acknowledged indeed that Perſons of a vicious Taſte, and who are under the Power of corrupt Luſts and Appetites, are apt to look upon the Laws of God, and the Duties there required, as very rigorous and ſevere. Againſt theſe their ſtrongeſt Prejudices lie. But to Minds rightly diſpoſed, and which can form a true Judgment of Things, *the Commandments of God* appear not only to be juſt and reaſonable, but, when faithfully obeyed and practiſed, to be *delightful* too. The beſt of Men in all Ages have found them ſo by their own Experience. It is given as the Character of the Man who is pronounced *bleſſed*, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord.* Pſ. i. 2. and that *he delighteth greatly in God's Commandments.* Pſ. cxii. 1. How often doth the Pſalmiſt

ist expres, in the strongest Terms, the high Affection and Esteem he had for *the Laws of God*, and the great Pleasure he found in them! *More to be desired are they than Gold; yea, than much fine Gold; sweeter also than Honey or the Honey-comb.* Ps. xix. 10. *Thy Testimonies have I taken as an Heritage for ever; for they are the Rejoicing of my Heart.* Ps. cxix. 111. What Warmth of Divine Affection gloweth in those Expressions, *Oh how I love thy Law!—I opened my Mouth and panted; for I longed for thy Commandments.*—My Soul hath kept *thy Testimonies, and I love them exceedingly.* Ib. Ver. 97, 131, 167. And, in the Words I have chosen for the Subject of this Discourse, he declares it, as his deliberate Purpose, *I will delight myself in thy Commandments, which I have loved.* It ought greatly to recommend them to our Esteem that they are *God's Commandments.* How pleasing must it be to a good Man, when engaged in any Course of Action, to be able to reflect—"When I am doing this, I am doing "what *God requireth* of me: I am serv-"ing and obeying the greatest and best "of Beings, my Creator and sovereign "Lord, my most generous and bountiful "Benefactor, to whom I am under the "highest

" highest possible Obligations, and in " whom alone I can be happy." If we were wholly unacquainted with the particular Reasons of *the Divine Commands*, yet we might be sure that they must be founded on the wisest and justest Reasons, since Nothing can proceed from a Being of infinite Wisdom, Goodness, and Purity, but what is wise, and good, and pure. But it is a mighty Advantage, when we ourselves, upon an impartial Consideration of *God's Commandments*, can plainly see that they are in themselves most reasonable and excellent, and that the Practice of them is conducive to the true Happiness and Perfection of our Nature, and is fitted to afford a solid Pleasure and Satisfaction to the Mind.

To set this in a proper Light, let us take a View of *the Divine Commandments*, as they are usually distributed under three Heads: Some of them relate to the Duties we more immediately owe to God; others to those we owe to our Fellow-creatures; others relate more immediately to ourselves, and to the right Government of our own Appetites and Passions. These several Branches of our Duty are plainly referred to in that noble and comprehensive Passage, Tit. ii. 11, 12. *The Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation,*

vation, hath appeared unto all Men, teaching us that, denying Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World.

I shall begin with considering that Part of the Duty required of us which more immediately relates to God, and which the Apostle in the Passage now cited expresses by *Living godly in this present World.* In Scripture Language the the Whole of practical Religion is sometimes called *Godliness*, to signify the necessary Relation it hath to the Deity; that a religious Regard to the supreme Being is essential to a holy and virtuous Life; and that the Duty we immediately owe to God is an eminent Part of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law. And it is with a peculiar Reference to this that I shall now consider it.

Our Living godly, taken in this View, includeth the following Things:

That we must have a firm Belief of the Existence and Providence of God, and must have our Souls possessed with just and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Perfections, and, in Consequence of this, our Hearts must be brought under the Influence of suitable holy Affections and Dispositions towards him.

That

That we must render him that religious Worship and Adoration that is justly due to him, and must be diligent in the Observance of those sacred Rites and Ordinances which he hath appointed in his Word.

That we must aspire after a Conformity to him in his amiable moral Excellencies, as far as he is imitable by such Creatures as we are.

And, finally, that we must be careful to maintain a constant Regard to him in our general Course, having an Eye to his Providence in the Events which befall us, and doing what we do as in his Sight, in Obedience to his Authority, and in a Subordination to his Glory as our supreme governing End.

These are the Things in which *true Godliness*, or the Practice of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law towards God, doth eminently consist. And it will not be difficult to shew, that the Exercising ourselves this Way tendeth to promote our Happiness, and to produce a Pleasure and Satisfaction of the noblest Kind.

Let us consider these Things distinctly.

First, *True Godliness* necessarily includeth a firm Belief of the Existence and Providence

Providence of God, juſt and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Perfections, and, in Conſequence of this, that our Hearts muſt be brought under the Influence of ſuitable holy Affections and Diſpoſitions towards him. It is obſerved by the inſpired Writer of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, that *he that cometh unto God, i. e.* he that would ſerve him in an acceptable Manner, *muſt believe that he is, and that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.* Heb. xi. 6. A lively Faith in an inviſible Deity lies at the Foundation of all Religion and Godlineſs. And indeed this is a Principle which cometh to us confirmed by ſuch clear and ſtrong Evidence, that one would think no reaſonable and conſiderate Mind could ſeriouſly and in good Earneſt doubt of it. This vaſt Fabric of the Univerſe, which we continually behold, and particularly the wonderful Frame of our own Bodies, and the noble Faculties of our Souls, lead us by a juſt and natural Conſequence to one ſupreme original Cauſe, *who was from everlaſting*, who gave Being to all other Things, but derived his own Being from none; *who created Heaven and Earth, and all Things that are therein*; and diſpoſed them in that beautiful Order in which they

now

now appear; and who continually upholdeth and preſerveth this univerſal Frame, and governeth the Creatures he hath made by his conſtant ſuperintending Providence.

And, as we muſt have a firm Perſuaſion of the Being and Providence of God, ſo our Minds muſt be poſſeſſed with juſt and worthy Conceptions of his glorious and incomparable Attributes and Perfections; that he is a Being of almighty and irreſiſtible Power, *who can do whatſoever he pleaſeth*; of immenſe Greatneſs, *who filleth Heaven and Earth*, and is intimately preſent to every Part of this vaſt Creation; that *his Wiſdom and Underſtanding is infinite*, and he knoweth, in every poſſible Inſtance, what is beſt and fitteſt to be done; that he is of the moſt diffuſive Goodneſs and Benignity, *and his tender Mercies are over all his Works*; that he is a Being of ſpotleſs Purity and Holineſs, of impartial Righteouſneſs and Equity, of invariable Faithfulneſs and Truth; that he is the ſupreme univerſal Lord, who giveth Laws to his reaſonable Creatures, and to whom they muſt be accountable for their Conduct; and that he will puniſh the obſtinate Tranſgreſſors of his Laws, and will reward thoſe that love and ſerve him

him in Sincerity; and, finally, that he is the chief Good, the Fountain of all Joy and Glory and Felicity, in whom alone we can be completely happy. A Senſe of theſe Things, when duly received and entertained in the Heart, hath a natural Tendency to produce correſpondent holy Affections and Diſpoſitions there: A ſuperlative Love to God, a profound Reverence of his Divine Majeſty, an abſolute unreſerved Submiſſion to his Authority and Reſignation to his Will, and a ſteady ingenuous Truſt and Confidence in him; all which are neceſſarily concluded in *true Godlineſs*, and are required of us in his holy and perfect Law.

There is no Diſpoſition towards God which is more eſſential to true Religion, and on which a greater Streſs is laid in the Sacred Writings, than Divine Love. Hence our Saviour, in Anſwer to the Queſtion that was propoſed to him, *Which is the great Commandment in the Law?* makes this remarkable Declaration, *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind. This is the firſt and great Commandment.* Matt. xxii. 37, 38. This Love to God is not to be underſtood of a mere tranſient Pang and paſſionate Warmth of

of Affection, but of the habitual abiding Diſpoſition of the Heart, founded in an inward Senſe and Perception of God's infinite Excellency and Amiableneſs in himſelf, and of his infinite Goodneſs, Grace, and Mercy towards his Creatures, particularly towards us of the human Race. Where this Love to God is of the right Kind, it hath a mighty attractive Force, whereby we are powerfully drawn to ſerve and to obey him; and it rendereth the Obedience free and ingenuous. And hence it is declared, that *this is the Love of God that we keep his Commandments; and his Commandments are not grievous.* 1 John v. 3. They are not grievous to a Soul animated with this Divine Principle. It kindleth in the Heart an earneſt Deſire to pleaſe him, and to glorify him in the World; and cauſeth us to value his Favour and Approbation above all Things. Where this is the reigning Diſpoſition, it will over-rule and controul the corrupt and ſenſual Affections, and will engage us, for his Sake, to mortify our moſt beloved Luſts, and to make all the Intereſts of the Fleſh and of the World give Way to the ſuperior Intereſts of his Kingdom; ſo that we ſhall not decline any Services or Sufferings to which we ſhall be called for the Cauſe

of

of Truth and Righteouſneſs, which is the Cauſe of God. It will tend to form us into his Divine Likeneſs, and will excite in us earneſt Aſpirations after that State where we hope to be admitted to the immediate transforming Viſions of his Glory, and to the full eternal Enjoyment of his Love. And now how happy muſt it be to act under the Influence of this glorious Principle! Love, when vigorouſly exerciſed on the beſt and nobleſt Object, in which there is an abſolute Confluence of all poſſible Perfections, is certainly the moſt delightful Thing in the World, a Source of the pureſt and moſt refined Joy. Here our Affections may riſe higher and higher to Eternity, and never equal the real Excellency and Amiableneſs of the Object. The Perfection of Divine Love is Heaven itſelf, and the Beginning of it here on Earth is the Beginning of Heaven and Glory. To command us therefore *to love God with all our Hearts* is in Effect to command us to promote our own higheſt Felicity, and to cultivate that Diſpoſition, which is the moſt delightful Temper of our Souls. We ſhould therefore, as we value our own Happineſs, do all we can to get our Hearts brought more and more under the Power and Influence of this

Divine Affection. In order to this, let us frequently repreſent to our Minds the Reaſons and Motives we have to love God above all. We ſhould riſe in our Thoughts to him as the ſovereign original Goodneſs and Beauty, the Source and Center of all Perfection, who is everlaſtingly and invariably poſſeſſed of all that is great and good, excellent and lovely. This wide Univerſe all around us ſhines with the Radiations of his Goodneſs and Glory. With what Delight ſhould we behold him diffuſing the Streams of his Benignity through the whole Creation, communicating Happineſs in various Degrees to numberleſs Orders of Beings, and particularly pouring forth the Bleſſings of his Providence in a rich Abundance to the human Race! But, above all, we ſhould frequently dwell in our Meditations on *the exceeding Riches of his Grace* as manifeſted towards us in his well-beloved Son *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord, and in the wonderful Methods of our Redemption and Salvation through him: For it is here eſpecially that he appeareth in all the Glory of that amiable Character, that *God is Love*.

And,

And, as it is required of us that we ſhould love God with a ſuperlative Affection, ſo alſo that we ſhould fear him with the profoundeſt Reverence. It is a Command frequently repeated in the Divine Law, *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God.* Deut. vi. 13. x. 12, 20. Agreeable to this is that Exhortation of the Prophet, *Sanctify the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be your Fear, and let him be your Dread.* Iſ. viii. 13. *Let us have Grace,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *whereby we may ſerve God acceptably with Reverence and godly Fear.* Heb. xii. 28. This is ſo neceſſary and of ſuch Importance, that *the Fear of God* is in Scripture-Language frequently put for the Whole of true Religion. This may ſeem to make an unamiable Repreſentation of it. But it muſt be conſidered, that *the Fear of God,* which true Religion tendeth to inſpire, is a quite different Thing from that ſervile Horror, the Effect of Superſtition, which ariſeth from wrong and unworthy Apprehenſions of the Deity, and is a perpetual Source of Uneaſineſs and Anxiety. The Fear that God requireth is a filial Awe, ſuch a Veneration mixed with Love, as floweth from the higheſt Eſteem of the ſupreme Being, and a juſt Senſe of his ſovereign Dominion and incomparable Perfections. Accordingly it

is repreſented as the genuine Temper of *the People of God*, that *they fear the Lord and his Goodneſs*. Hoſ. iii. 5. It is ſuch a Fear of God as cauſeth us to dread his Diſpleaſure above all Things, and maketh us careful not to offend him, and deſirous to ſhun every Thing which is contrary to his holy Will and Law. And hence *to fear the Lord, and to depart from Evil*, are repreſented as inſeparably connected, and as in Effect the ſame Thing. *Job* xxviii. 28. *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom; and to depart from Evil is Underſtanding* This holy Fear of God hath a natural Tendency to check the Vanity and Levity of the Mind, to repreſs the tumultuous Motions of the diſorderly Appetites and Paſſions, and to keep every Thing quiet and in good Order within; and conſequently it tendeth to produce an inward happy Compoſure and peaceful Tranquillity. And the great Benefit and Satisfaction ariſing from this is very evident, eſpecially when it is conſidered, that, in Proportion as the Soul is under the Influence of a well-regulated Fear of God, it will be raiſed above the Diſturbance of all other Fears. An habitual awful Senſe of the Divine Majeſty, deeply impreſſed upon the Heart, will cauſe a Man to think little comparatively of the Power or Terror of Creatures

Creatures like himſelf; ſo that this Part of the Divine Law is alſo manifeſtly conducive to our Happineſs, and we cannot do a better Thing for ourſelves, than to endeavour to get our Souls thoroughly poſſeſſed with a reverential Regard to the Lord *Jehovah*. In order to this we ſhould frequently realiſe him to our Minds in his univerſal Sovereignty, his immenſe Greatneſs his almighty Power, his boundleſs Goodneſs, his impartial Righteouſneſs, and ſpotleſs Purity. This glorious Aſſemblage of Excellencies and Perfections naturally tendeth to ſtrike the Mind with a ſacred Awe of God, and repreſents him as infinitely venerable as well as amiable.

Another Diſpoſition towards God, which is alſo of great Importance in Religion, is an abſolute Submiſſion to his Authority and Reſignation to his Will. And this indeed naturally follows from ſuch a ſuperlative Love to God, and reverential Awe of his Divine Majeſty, and Fear of offending him, as have been mentioned. That is a very important and comprehenſive Precept, *Submit yourſelves to God.* Jam. iv. 7. This is to be underſtood of a willing complacential Submiſſion, not as of Neceſſity and Compulſion, but from Inclination and Choice; and it muſt be abſolute and intire, without

Exception, Limitation, or Reſerve: For abſolute Dominion, in Conjunction with infinite Goodneſs and unlimited Perfection, is moſt juſtly intitled to abſolute unreſerved Submiſſion and Obedience. It ought to be the Language, not merely of our Lips, but of our Hearts, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6. *Here am I, let the Lord do to me as ſeemeth good unto him.* 2 Sam. xv. 26. *The Will of the Lord be done.* Acts xxi. 14. It ſhould be the Matter of our daily Prayer, that *his Will may be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven.* We muſt do what we can that our obſtinate Self-will may be ſubdued, and that our Wills may be wholly regulated and determined by the good and holy Will of God, reſolving to make it our ſincere and conſtant Endeavour to walk in Obedience to all his Commands, and to acquieſce in all his Appointments. This is a Temper of Mind highly reaſonable, and ſuited to the Relations between him and us, as he is our Maker and abſolute Proprietor, and we are his Creatures, his conſtant Dependents and Beneficiaries, and the Subjects of his moral Government. And how happy is it to have our Souls thus wrought into a ſubmiſſive obediential Frame, and our Wills reſolved into the Divine! To reſign ourſelves to the Conduct of the infinitely perfect Being, and embrace what the ſupreme Wiſdom

Wiſdom and Goodneſs ſeeth to be really beſt and fitteſt for us!

This leadeth me to add, that we are required in the Divine Law to exerciſe a firm Truſt in God, and a fiducial Dependence upon him. To engage us to this is the Deſign of thoſe excellent Precepts, *Wait upon the Lord, and he ſhall ſtrengthen thine Heart; wait, I ſay, on the Lord.* Pſ. xxvii. 14. *Commit thy Way unto the Lord; truſt alſo in him; and he ſhall bring it to paſs.* Pſ. xxxvii. 5. *Caſt thy Burden upon the Lord, and he ſhall ſuſtain thee; he ſhall never ſuffer the Righteous to be moved.* Pſ. lv. 22. *Truſt in the Lord with all thine Heart, and lean not unto thine own Underſtanding; in all thy Ways acknowledge him, and he ſhall direct thy Paths.* Prov. iii. 5, 6. We are required *not to truſt in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy.* 1 Tim. vi. 17. And to *commit the Keeping of our Souls to him, in Well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* 1 Pet. iv. 19. And ſurely the very Mention of theſe Duties of Religion is ſufficient to ſhew their Reaſonableneſs and Excellency, and the great Advantage and Satisfaction which will ariſe from the Obſervation of them. If we were to contrive Laws for our own Benefit, they could not poſſibly be better

fitted to promote our Happineſs. What a Privilege is it to be allowed, and even commanded, *to put our Truſt in God, and to caſt our Cares upon him*, and, amidſt all the Changes and Viciſſitudes of this mortal Life, to make the Lord *Jehovah our Stay and our Refuge!* This is the beſt, the moſt effectual Remedy againſt anxious Cares, deſponding Fears, and fretting Diſcontents! Happy thoſe, above the reſt of Mankind, who, firmly relying on God's all-ſufficient Goodneſs, and on his moſt gracious Promiſes, *commit their Bodies and Souls*, their Concernments *for the Life that now is, and for that which is to come, into his Hands*, being perſuaded that he will order all Things really for the beſt, and that all his Diſpenſations are conducted by the ſteady Rules of infinite Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and Equity! What inward Peace and Pleaſure do ſuch Perſons enjoy, what a ſolid Contentment and Satisfaction of Mind, to which they are Strangers who live in the Neglect of theſe excellent Precepts! *The Lord God is a Sun and Shield; he will give Grace and Glory; no good Thing will he with-hold from them that walk uprightly. O Lord, of Hoſts, bleſſed is the Man that truſteth in thee.* Pſ. lxxxiv. 11, 12.

Thus

Thus I have conſidered thoſe Affections and Diſpoſitions towards God, which are neceſſarily included in *true Godlineſs*, and in which the Religion of the Heart doth eminently conſiſt. And it plainly appears, that this Part of our Duty is not only perfectly agreeable to right Reaſon, but is manifeſtly conducive to our own Happineſs, and lays a ſolid Foundation for an inward Satisfaction and Delight. What further remaineth to be conſidered, with Reſpect to *our living godly in this preſent World*, muſt be reſerved for another Diſcourſe.

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE IX.

PSALM CXIX. 47.

I will delight myself in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

WE are now considering that Part of the Duty required of us in the Divine Law which immediately relateth to God, and which may in the propereſt Senſe be called *Godlineſs*. This includeth, as hath been already ſhewn, our Endeavouring to get our Minds poſſeſſed with a ſtrong and lively Perſuaſion of the Exiſtence, the Perfections, and Providence of God, and with thoſe holy Affections and Diſpoſitions which become reaſonable Creatures towards the ſupreme

ſupreme Being; ſuch as a ſuperlative Love, a profound and filial Reverence, an abſolute Submiſſion to his Authority and Reſignation to his Will, and an ingenuous ſteady Truſt and Affiance in him.

I now proceed to obſerve farther, that it is a neceſſary Part of *true Godlineſs*, or of the Duty we owe to God, to render him that religious Worſhip which is his Due, and to obſerve thoſe ſacred Rites and Ordinances which he hath appointed in his Word. It is an important Part of the Divine Law, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.* Matt. iv. 10. This Worſhipping of God includeth, as the principal Part of it, an inward Adoration and Devotion: *God is a Spirit*, ſaith our Saviour, *and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.* Our Hearts and Affections, and all the Powers of our Souls, muſt be engaged, when we pay our religious Homage to that moſt pure and perfect Mind, the Sovereign Lord of the Univerſe; and, that we may do this in a proper Manner, we muſt endeavour to withdraw our Thoughts for a While from our worldly Occupations, Diverſions, and Cares, and fix them upon God, realiſing him to our Minds in his incomparable Majeſty, his Greatneſs, Goodneſs, and Purity.

And

And this muſt be ordinarily accompanied with ſome outward Signs and Expreſſions of the inward Devotion of our Hearts: The very Frame of the human Body ſeems to be peculiarly fitted for this. Man is made with a Countenance erect towards Heaven, and not, like that of other Animals, prone towards the Earth: He hath the Power of bending his Knees, and of raiſing his Hands in an adoring Poſture, and of lifting up his Eyes in a Manner wonderfully expreſſive of awful Veneration; and by the admirable Faculty of Speech he is capable of uttering, in diſtinct articulate Sounds, the inward Sentiments and Affections of his Mind. It is proper therefore that, at the ſame Time that *we worſhip God in our Spirits*, there ſhould be ſomething correſpondent to it in our bodily Geſture and Deportment: *O come let us worſhip and bow down*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *let us kneel before the Lord our Maker*. Pſ. xcv. 6. But eſpecially we ſhould, on ſuch Occaſions, expreſs in Words the devout Sentiments of our Hearts. This is very proper and uſeful even in our private Devotions, but is abſolutely neceſſary in public and ſocial Acts of Worſhip. And, as theſe Acts of Religion have an immediate Relation to the Deity, ſo we are ſaid, in the Language of Scripture, *to draw near to God*

in

in those holy Exercises. We then maintain a sacred Intercourse with him, we set ourselves as in his immediate Presence, and, as far as in us lies, lay our Souls open to his Divine Communications. God doth not require this of us, as if he were to be a Gainer by our Worshipping him: For what Profit or Advantage can the all-sufficient *Jehovah* reap from the religious Services we are capable of offering? But he requireth us to worship him, because it is in the Nature of Things most fit and proper that reasonable Creatures should render this sacred Homage to the supreme Lord of the Universe, and because it is a worthy Employment of the noble Faculties and Powers he hath given us, and tends to the Heightening and Improving pious and excellent Dispositions in our Souls, and consequently to the Promoting the true Happiness and Perfection of our Natures. Surely then every sincere and well-disposed Mind may upon just Grounds say, with the devout Psalmist, *It is good for me to draw near to God.* Ps. lxxiii. 28.

One eminent Part of religious Worship is Prayer, whereby we apply to God for the Blessings we stand in need of, whether spiritual or temporal, relating to our Bodies or to our Souls: And this, in such sinful Creatures

tures as we are, ſhould be accompanied with humble penitent Confeſſions of our Iniquities, which render us utterly unworthy of his Favour; and with earneſt Supplications for his pardoning Grace and Mercy. By Prayer we acknowledge him as the ſupreme Diſpoſer, the Author and Fountain of all Good, *from whom every good and perfect Gift doth deſcend.* This is a Duty frequently and expreſly required in the Divine Law: It is to be our daily Exerciſe. Nothing leſs than this can be underſtood by that Precept, *Pray without Ceaſing.* 1 Theſſ. v. 17. And, for our Encouragement in this Duty, God is deſcribed under this Character, that *he is the Hearer of Prayer.* Pſ. lxv. 2. And it is a marvellous Inſtance of his Grace and condeſcending Goodneſs towards us, and of his earneſt Deſire of our Happineſs, that he is pleaſed not only to allow, but to invite and even to command us to apply to him by Prayer for whatſoever Things are really good and needful for us. What a gracious Command is that, in *Phil.* iv. 6, *Be careful,* or *anxiouſly ſollicitous, for Nothing, but in every Thing by Prayer and Supplication, with Thanſgiving, let your Requeſts be made known unto God!* Not as if he did not know what we ſtand in need of without our Prayers, but

but it is his Will that we ſhould ourſelves repreſent our Wants and Deſires before him, and humbly apply to him for Aſſiſtance and Relief, in order to the keeping up in our Minds a conſtant Senſe of our Dependence upon God, and to the ſtrengthening of holy and good Affections towards him in our Hearts: And this, when rightly performed, is highly advantageous and delightful. Whilſt we ſolemnly invocate his Divine Majeſty, and addreſs ourſelves to him by earneſt Prayer and Supplication, we feel his ſacred and powerful Attractions, we are brought into a nearer Acquaintance with him, and to a more intimate Senſation of his Glory and Excellency, and all-ſufficient Goodneſs. What a mighty Advantage and Comfort is it that, under all our Grievances and Diſtreſſes, we have a Liberty of Acceſs to God through *Jeſus Chriſt*, and can *come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, to obtain Mercy, and to find Grace to help us in the Time of Need?* Heb. iv. 16. We can at all Times pour forth our Wants into the Boſom of our moſt compaſſionate *heavenly Father*, and *almighty Friend*, who is *more ready to give good Things, and eſpecially his Holy Spirit, to them that ſincerely aſk him, than earthly Parents are to give good Gifts unto their Children*. Matt. vii. 11. Luke xi. 13. In this Reſpect

Reſpect it may be juſtly ſaid, that God hath required that of us which we ourſelves ought above all Things to have deſired; and that what is injoined in his Law, as our Duty, is really our greateſt Privilege. What unhappy Creatures muſt we have been, if, inſtead of commanding us to apply to him by Prayer, God had forbidden us to preſume to offer up a Petition or Requeſt to him, or to take his ſacred Name into our Lips! And yet many there are who, *by reſtraining Prayer before God*, do in Effect cut themſelves off from this ineſtimable Privilege.

As to the noble Work of Thankſgiving and Praiſe, which is another excellent Part of religious Worſhip, it evidently carries Delight in it's very Nature and Exerciſe: For it is, when rightly performed, the Exerciſe of Love, Admiration, and Gratitude, that is, of our nobleſt and moſt delightful Affections, towards the moſt excellent of all Objects. What a Divine Joy ſpringeth up in a good Man's Heart, when he calleth upon *his Soul and all that is within him* to adore and bleſs God's glorious Name, to publiſh his moſt worthy Praiſe, and to celebrate his peerleſs Perfections and many marvellous Benefits! Whilſt he is thus engaged, giving Vent to his beſt Affections, and

offering up the grateful Tribute of a devout Mind, he mingleth as it were with the bleſſed Seraphims, and entereth upon their Employments and their Joys, and can look down with a generous Contempt upon all the low muddy Delights of Senſe and this vain World. Juſtly therefore doth the Pſalmiſt declare, that *it is good to ſing Praiſes unto our God; for it is pleaſant, and Praiſe is comely.* Pſ. cxlvii. 1. And again Pſ. cxxxv. 3. *Praiſe ye the Lord, for the Lord is good; ſing Praiſes unto his Name, for it is pleaſant.*

I add, that the religious Worſhip, which the Divine Law requireth, doth alſo include a diligent Attendance on thoſe ſacred Ordinances which God hath appointed in his Word. It is certainly a great Advantage that we have religious Rites preſcribed to us by God himſelf to be uſed in his Worſhip, and a due Obſervance of them, inſtead of being an uneaſy Burden upon us, doth really contribute to our Satisfaction and Joy. This is particularly true of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the principal ſtanding Ordinance of the *New Teſtament*, and which *Chriſt*'s faithful Diſciples are obliged frequently to celebrate. What can have a happier Influence to fill the Heart of a ſincere *Chriſtian* with Conſolation and Joy, than

than frequently to commemorate our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the great Things he hath done and ſuffered for our Salvation! To be allowed and invited *to celebrate a holy Feaſt* over the affecting Memorials of the Redeemer's Sacrifice, and to ſolemniſe a ſacred Covenant with God through his well-beloved Son; *who loved us, and gave himſelf for us!* Among the primitive *Chriſtians*, this Sacrament was wont to be called *the Euchariſt*, i. e. *Thankſgiving*, for ſo the Word ſignifies; becauſe joyful Thankſgiving and Praiſe is there our proper Work. How great then are our Obligations to the Goodneſs of God, that he hath been graciouſly pleaſed to inſtitute ſuch an Ordinance as this for ſtrengthening our Faith, and confirming our pious Reſolutions, and heightening our Joys in this Pilgrimage-ſtate! And what Enemies are they to their own Comfort who live in the habitual Neglect of it?

Upon this brief View of the principal Parts of Divine Worſhip, I think it may be juſtly affirmed, that the religious Service of the *Lord's-Day* is to a well-diſpoſed Mind a delightful Employment. It is far from being a Hardſhip to be obliged to ſet apart one Day in Seven for God's more immediate Worſhip and Service: And thoſe certainly

betray a depraved Temper of Mind who find Fault with Religion and the Divine Love on this Account. If the ſtated Returns of this ſacred Day were more frequent, there might be ſome Pretence for complaining, that it prejudiced our worldly Affairs, and that we were abridged of the Time neceſſary for our Buſineſs, or for our Recreations; if the Returns were more rare, we ſhould run a great Hazard of loſing the Reliſh of ſpiritual Things, and of being abſolutely immerſed in the Pleaſures and Cares of this preſent World: But, by requiring us to lay aſide our worldly Employments, and apply ourſelves to the immediate Exerciſes of Religion, one Day in a Week, God hath wiſely and mercifully provided for the Eaſe and Refreſhment of our Bodies, and for the Improvement of our Minds. And, if we make a right Uſe of our Opportunities, we ſhall find that they are the moſt delightful Seaſons we enjoy here on Earth, and which tend greatly to ſtrengthen and enlarge good Affections and Diſpoſitions in our Souls, and to form us into a Meetneſs for the Work and for the Joys of Heaven. Juſtly therefore is *the Sabbath* called *a Delight, the Holy of the Lord, and honourable.* Iſ. lviii. 13. The beſt of Men in all Ages have ſet a high Value upon the Ordinances

of

of Religion, and the Exerciſes of Divine Worſhip; and have expreſſed great Satisfaction in them. This is what the devout Pſalmiſt frequently ſignifies in the moſt emphatical Expreſſions: *One Thing have I deſired of the Lord, that will I ſeek after; that I may dwell in the Houſe of the Lord for ever, to behold the Beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his Temple.* Pſ. xxvii. 4. *Send forth thy Light and thy Truth; let them lead me, let them bring me near to thy holy Hill, and to thy Tabernacles; then will I approach to the Altar of God, to God my exceeding Joy.* Pſ. xliii. 3, 4. The xliid and lxiiid Pſalms are particularly remarkable to this Purpoſe; and it is the intire Subject of the lxxxivth: *How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts! — My Soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord; my Heart and my Fleſh crieth out for the living God. — One Day in thy Courts is better than a Thouſand; I had rather be a Door-keeper in the Houſe of my God, than to dwell in the Tents of Wickedneſs.* Pſ. lxxxiv. 1, 2, 10. And, if good Men under the Old Teſtament found ſuch Delight *in drawing near to God* in the Ordinances of his Houſe, and in the Solemnity of his Worſhip, how much more ſhould we do ſo under the moſt perfect Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, in which we have moſt glorious

Manifeſtations of the Divine Grace and Goodneſs, and the Ordinances of which are more free and ſpiritual, and more fitted to produce a ſacred Joy! Some will be ready to brand all this with the contemptuous Name of *Enthuſiaſm*; for which I can ſee no Reaſon, except they be reſolved to call the nobleſt Elevations of the Heart and Affections towards the moſt excellent Objects by that Name. But they, who have had Experience of thoſe Divine Joys, will not ſuffer themſelves to be bantered out of their own Feelings by thoſe who *ſpeak Evil of the Things they underſtand not*; nor would they exchange the pure Delights of Communion with God in the Ordinances of his Worſhip for all the boaſted Pleaſures of the voluptuous Senſualiſt. And, if the Generality of profeſſed *Chriſtians* do not find ſo much Delight in religious Duties, and in attending on Divine Ordinances, as might be expected, it is becauſe they are apt to take up with a mere ſpiritleſs *Form of Godlineſs*, and with the mere outward Performance of ſacred Exerciſes; and do not take Pains to ſtir up good Affections in their Hearts, and to maintain that Divine Temper of Soul which ſhould animate all our Devotions.

But it is proper to obſerve farther, Thirdly, That *true Godlineſs*, or the Practice of the

Duty

Duty we owe to God, not only includes our rendering him that Worſhip which is due, but our endeavouring to imitate him in his amiable moral Excellencies, as far as we are capable of doing ſo. God hath been pleaſed, in his marvellous Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion, to honour us ſo far as to propoſe himſelf to us in his holy Word, as the great Exemplar and Pattern to which we muſt labour to be conformed: It is his expreſs Command, *Be ye holy, for I am holy.* Levit. xix. 2. 1 Pet. i. 16. To the ſame Purpoſe is that Injunction in *Eph.* v. 1. *Be ye Followers* (or, as it might be more properly rendered, *Imitators*) *of God, as dear Children.* Our Saviour ſignifieth the ſame Thing in a very ſtrong and emphatical Manner of Expreſſion, when he ſaith, *Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.* Matt. v. 48. This cannot be underſtood as if we were capable of attaining to an equal Degree of Perfection with God himſelf, which it were abſurd and impious to imagine; but the Meaning is, that we ſhould make it our earneſt Deſire and continual Endeavour to reſemble him more and more in his imitable moral Perfections; for it is evident, that it is to God's moral Perfections that our Saviour there refers, and eſpecially to his beneficent Love and Goodneſs.

We muſt do what we can, as reaſonable and moral Agents, to get his amiable Perfections copied out upon our own Souls. Man, in his primitive State of Rectitude, is repreſented as *having been made after the Image of God*, which is not ſaid of any of the inferior Creatures: And it is the great Deſign of *Chriſtianity* to engage us *to put on the new Man, which after God is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs*. Eph. iv. 24. True *Chriſtians* are ſaid to be *made Partakers of the Divine Nature*. 2 Pet. i. 4. And ſurely this ſets our Duty in a noble and engaging Light. What a happy, as well as honourable, Thing muſt it be to aſpire to be like God, the great Original of all Perfection and Excellence; and like his well-beloved Son, in Purity and Holineſs, in Goodneſs and univerſal Benevolence, in Righteouſneſs and Equity, in Faithfulneſs and Truth! Like him in an invariable Love of what is morally good and excellent, and in a ſteady Abhorrence of all Injuſtice and Impurity, Falſehood and Deceit! He requireth us thus to endeavour after a Conformity to him here on Earth, that we may be fitted for a Participation of his Felicity and Glory in the heavenly State, where *we ſhall behold his Face in Righteouſneſs, and ſhall be perfectly ſatisfied with his Likeneſs*.

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The laſt Thing I ſhall mention, with Reſpect to the Duty we owe to God, is, that we ſhould be careful to maintain a conſtant habitual Regard to him in our whole Courſe, having an Eye to his Providence in the Events which befall us, and doing what we do as in his Sight, and in a Subordination to his Glory. The Command which was given by God to *Abraham, the Father of the Faithful*, is really of univerſal Obligation: *I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.* Gen. xvii. 1. Where it is intimated, that *to walk as before God*, and under a conſtant Senſe of his Preſence, is the ſureſt Way to Perfection, as far as we are capable of attaining to it here on Earth. It is an expreſs and comprehenſive Injunction, *Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatſoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* 1. Cor. x. 31. The governing End we muſt have in View in every Part of our Conduct ſhould be, not the Gratifying our own fleſhly Appetites, or the Promoting our worldly Intereſts, or the Procuring to ourſelves the Applauſe of Men; but the Pleaſing and Honouring God, and *Finiſhing the Work which he*, our ſupreme and rightful Lord, *hath given us to do.* This will render our Practice conſiſtent and uniform, and will ſpread a

Beauty

Beauty and Harmony through the Whole. Thus to live as unto God and for God; to act daily as in his Presence, and with a Regard to his Approbation; is certainly the most excellent and comfortable Life in the World. Happy those who, having their Hearts habitually impressed with a Sense of a present Deity, of his sovereign Authority and incomparable Perfections, *walk as before the Lord in the Land of the Living!* They carry about with them the most effectual Preservative against every Temptation, and the most powerful Engagement to every Duty. This hath a Tendency to keep them steady amidst the many Fluctuations of this uncertain World: They set the Word of God before them as their Rule, and in their Designs and Undertakings have a Sense of their continual Dependence upon his Providence. In their Prosperity they consider him as the glorious Author of all the Advantages they enjoy, and to his Blessing ascribe the Success of their honest Endeavours: In the Adversities and Afflictions they meet with, they reverence his Hand, being satisfied that they are all ordered and permitted by him for wise and righteous Ends. Thus a Regard to God governeth them in their general Course: And in this View *true Godliness*

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may be ſaid to comprehend the Whole of a virtuous Practice, and ſpreadeth it's Influence through every Part of our Duty, even that which more immediately relateth to our Fellow-creatures, or to ourſelves. With what Satisfaction many good Men engage in the Buſineſs of their ſeveral Callings, Stations, and Employments, and in the Performance of the Duties incumbent upon them in their civil and ſocial Capacities, when they do them as in Obedience to the Will of God, and with a Reference to his Glory as the ſupreme End, ſenſible that this is a Part of the Work which he requireth of them in this State of Trial! Thus even their worldly Employments are ſanctified, and become a Part of Religion; their Life may be ſaid to be *a Serving God*: and they find an inward Satisfaction reſulting from a Conſciouſneſs of the Divine Approbation, which thoſe who *live as without God in the World* are Strangers to.

I would conclude this Diſcourſe with obſerving, that, in our religious Tranſactions with the Deity, we muſt have a conſtant Regard to our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, the Mediator. It is an important Doctrine of the Goſpel, that, as *there is one God, ſo there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man* Chriſt Jeſus, as St. *Paul* expreſſeth it, 1 *Tim.* ii. 5.

5. And this is not a mere Point of Speculation, but muſt have a ſuitable Influence on the Practice. Through this great and only Mediator we are required to offer up our ſpiritual Sacrifices of Prayer and Praiſe. Through him we are to apply for the Pardon of our Sins, and for the Influences and Aids of the Holy Spirit. In him we are to hope for the Acceptance of our Perſons and Services, exerciſing a conſtant Reliance on his Mediation, and Interceſſion, and ſaving Power. We muſt live the *Life we live in the Fleſh by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave himſelf for us*; and are expreſly commanded, *whatſoever we do in Word or Deed, to do all in the Name of* Jeſus Chriſt, *giving Thanks unto God and the Father by him.* Col. iii. 17. And this is ſo far from being an Hardſhip upon us, that it is our greateſt Privilege. God, by obliging us to have a continual Regard to the Mediator, hath manifeſtly conſulted our Satisfaction and Advantage. He hath not only provided for diſpenſing his Benefits in ſuch a Manner as is beſt ſuited to the Honour of his Government and illuſtrious moral Excellencies, but hath taken the moſt effectual Method to remove the Fears and Jealouſies of our guilty Minds, and to inſpire us with an ingenuous Affiance

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in his Grace and Mercy. How happy is it to maintain Communion with *the God and Father of all through the Son of his Love, in whom he is always well pleaſed!* To be *daily looking unto Jeſus* who is *able to ſave unto the uttermoſt all them that come unto God by him*, to have his bright Example ever in View as our great Pattern, to feel the ſacred Conſtraints of his wonderous Love, and to apply to him for Grace and Strength *in whom it hath pleaſed the Father that all Fulneſs ſhould dwell!* And, finally, to put ourſelves under his gracious Conduct and Government, who is conſtituted *the Head over all Things to his Church*; and to look forwards by Faith and Hope to his glorious Appearing, *when he ſhall come to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in all them that believe*, and ſhall put the finiſhing Hand to the great Work of our Salvation! What a comfortable Life is this! And how great is the Goodneſs of God in requiring theſe Things of us!

Thus have I endeavoured to explain the true Nature and Extent of our Duty in the Relation it bears to God, and on the Account of which it may in the propereſt Senſe be called *Piety* or *Godlineſs*. And I have inſiſted the more largely upon this, becauſe it is what many Perſons ſeem to have

have a ſtrong Prejudice againſt. But, from the Account which hath been given of it, the Duty required of us in the Divine Law, conſidered in this View, appears to be moſt reaſonable and excellent, and is a Source of Divine Joy and Comfort. No Perſons have ſo much real Satisfaction and Enjoyment as they who, not in outward Appearance only, but, *in Sincerity and Truth, live godly in this preſent World*: And they that neglect to do ſo are not only deficient in the nobleſt Part of their Duty, and act in a Manner unbecoming reaſonable Creatures, the Subjects of God's moral Government, but are in Effect Enemies to their own true Peace and Happineſs.

On

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE X.

PSALM CXIX. 47.

I will delight myself in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

HAVING considered the Duty we more immediately owe to God, and which cometh properly under the Notion of *Piety* or *Godliness*; and shown, that it is really conducive to our own Satisfaction and Happiness; let us, next, proceed to the Duties required of us in the Divine Law towards our Fellow-creatures, which, as well as the former, are essential to true Religion, and necessarily included in a holy and virtuous Practice.

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If we attend to the Frame of our Nature, we ſhall eaſily be convinced, that the Author of our Beings deſigned us for mutual Aſſiſtance and Benevolence. We are, in the original Principles of our Conſtitution, ſociable Creatures, *i. e.* fitted for the Offices, the Duties, the Enjoyments of Society. The Happineſs of our Fellow-creatures, when our Minds are not diſtorted by Envy, or under the Influence of diſorderly Paſſions, exhilarates and gives us Pleaſure. And our own Joys are enlarged and heightened by Communicating, and would in a great Meaſure loſe their Reliſh in Solitude: And, on the other Hand, the Miſeries of others, their Tears, their Groans, their Sorrows, naturally affect and move us, and tend to produce correſpondent Feelings in our own Breaſts. To which it may be added, that Men alone, of all the Creatures in this lower World, are endued with the Faculty of Speech, whereby they are capable of ſocial Intercourſe; of communicating to one another their Counſels and Deſigns, their Knowledge and Experience; of contributing towards each other's Improvement, and of promoting each other's Intereſts. It ſtrengtheneth this, when it is conſidered, that God in his wiſe Providence hath placed us in ſuch Circumſtances here on Earth, that we really ſtand in Need one of another. We

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are caſt upon the Care of others, when we firſt come into the World; and ever afterwards need the Aſſiſtances, the kind Offices, and friendly Affections of our Fellow-creatures, for obtaining and enjoying the Neceſſaries and Conveniences of human Life. This is true of all without Exception, from the King to the Peaſant, from the higheſt to the meaneſt of the human Race. The Rich and Great need the Labours and Services of the Poor, as the Poor need to be aſſiſted by the Wealth and Bounty of the Rich. We are under a Neceſſity therefore of entering into Society, to which alſo we are carried by a natural Inclination; and in ſuch a Temper and Behaviour as tendeth to mutual Satisfaction and Advantage, and to promote the general Good, all ſocial Virtue doth conſiſt. As far as we are deficient in this, we are wanting to the original Intention and Conſtitution of our Being, and to the Deſign of Providence in placing us here on Earth. And accordingly no ſmall Part of the Divine Law relateth to ſocial Duties, and the Offices incumbent upon us towards our Fellow-creatures. Theſe are of great Extent: But they may be reduced to two principal Heads, *Juſtice* and *Charity*; both which are ſignified in that remarkable Paſſage of the Prophet *Micah*, which ſets

before us an excellent Summary of our Duty: *He hath ſhewed thee, O Man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* Micah vi. 8. The laſt Part of the Words particularly relates to the Duty we more immediately owe to God, which hath been already conſidered. Our Duty towards Man is here diſtibuted into two main Branches, *the Doing juſtly, and the Loving Mercy.*

It is the firſt of theſe that I ſhall now conſider: *The Lord requireth of us to do juſtly*, i. e. that we ſhould do no Man any Wrong, but ſhould, as far as in us lies, do that which is juſt and right to all Men. This is the Deſign of that comprehenſive Precept in *Rom.* xiii. 7. *Render to all their Dues.* We muſt endeavour to preſerve to every Man his juſt Rights, and not allow ourſelves to do any Thing which tends to deprive him of thoſe Rights, or to injure him in them; for, as far as we do ſo, we act *unjuſtly* by him. That admirable Maxim of our Saviour placeth this in a fair and obvious Light: *All Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.* Matt. vii. 12. We are generally quick-ſighted enough in diſcerning our own Rights. We readily

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ſee what is due to us from others, or what it is reaſonable and fit that they ſhould do unto us. It will therefore help to ſet us right in our Conduct towards them to put ourſelves in their Place, and make their Caſe our own; and, whatſoever we are upon cool Reflection ſatisfied, that it would be *juſt* and *right* for others to do to us, we muſt look upon it to be equally *juſt* and *right* that we ſhould do ſo to them in the like Circumſtances. This is what Reaſon plainly requires: And an excellent Rule it is, which, if duly attended to, would be of great Uſe to direct us to a *juſt* and *equitable* Behaviour towards all with whom we have to do.

But it will be proper to conſider this Matter more diſtinctly. Rights there are of various Kinds; natural and civil Rights, and Rights reſulting from particular Stations and Relations, Conditions and Circumſtances. And *Juſtice* requireth, that we ſhould be careful, in our Dealings with others, not to infringe any of their Rights, nor to with-hold from them what on any of theſe Accounts is *juſtly* due to them.

Firſt, There are what may be called natural Rights, Rights belonging to Men as Men, and which do not merely ariſe from arbitrary civil Conſtitutions, or particular

Compacts. Of this Kind is the Right of private Judgment in Matters of Religion and Conſcience: For, as the Salvation of the Soul and eternal Happineſs is of far greater Conſequence to every Man than any temporal Intereſts whatſoever, ſo the greateſt and moſt valuable of all his Rights is that of taking Care of his Soul, and doing what is neceſſary for his Salvation; and to abridge him of this Right is to do him the greateſt Injury. As every Man muſt give an Account of himſelf to God, and not merely another for him; ſo every Man muſt judge for himſelf in Matters of Religion, according to the Reaſon which God hath given him, and in a careful Improvement of thoſe Helps that are afforded him, and which he is obliged not to neglect: For a Man's Judging for himſelf is not to be underſtood of a confident Preſumption, and Self-ſufficiency, as if he were to be left to his own Guidance, and ſtood in no Need of Inſtruction or Aſſiſtance. It is his Wiſdom and Duty to make Uſe of the beſt Inſtructions and Informations he can procure, otherwiſe his Ignorance, or Error, will be highly culpable. But, when he hath taken the propereſt Methods in his Power to get his Conſcience well informed, he hath a Right to ſerve and worſhip God in that Way which

which appears to him to be moſt agreeable to the Divine Will, and to the Light of his holy Word; and conſequently he hath a Right not to be compelled to profeſs that to be true which he believes to be falſe, or to practiſe that which his own Mind and Conſcience diſapproves and condemns as ſinful. We are required to *prove* or *try all Things*; and to *hold faſt that which is good*, i. e. that which appears to us, upon a careful and impartial Examination, to be good and true. 1 *Theſſ.* v. 21. It is a ſtanding Rule in religious Matters, *Let every Man be fully perſuaded in his own Mind.* Rom. xiv. 5. And therefore he ought not to be conſtrained by Force to act contrary to that Perſuaſion. The greateſt Infringement of that Right is open Perſecution, when, on the Account of Opinions and Practices which do not diſturb the civil Peace and Order of the Community, violent compulſory Methods are made Uſe of by bodily Pains or Impriſonment, or by threatening Men with the Deprivation of worldly Subſtance, or even of Life itſelf, to hinder them from acting according to the Dictates of their Conſciences, or to force them to act contrary to thoſe Dictates, *i. e.* to force them to ſin; for he that acteth againſt his Conſcience ſinneth: And, where it is not car-

ried ſo far, yet, if we revile and calumniate others for their religious Sentiments, we act an *unjuſt* Part towards them. We may indeed, upon the moſt mature and impartial Inquiry, think them to be in an Error, and in an Error which appears to us to be of a dangerous Tendency; and in that Caſe it is both lawful and a Duty to endeavour to reclaim them *in a Spirit of Meekneſs*, and by Reaſon and Scripture to convince them of it, and to guard others againſt it. But we muſt not, merely on Account of their Opinions, however miſtaken, when they appear otherwiſe to be Perſons truly conſcientious and of real Piety and Virtue, take upon us peremptorily to judge of their State with regard to the Favour of God and eternal Salvation. Such raſh Judgments are expreſsly forbidden in the Divine Law: *There is one Lawgiver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy. Who art thou that judgeſt another?* Jam. iv. 12. *Why doſt thou judge thy Brother? Or why doſt thou ſet at nought thy Brother? For we ſhall all ſtand before the Judgment-ſeat of* Chriſt. Rom. xiv. 4, 10. *Judge not*, ſaith our Saviour, *that ye be not judged: For, with what Judgment ye judge, ye ſhall be judged; and, with what Meaſure ye mete, it ſhall be meaſured to you again.* Matt. vii. 1, 2. Every Man is ſenſible of the

the Right of Conſcience in his own Caſe, and of the *Injuſtice* of Perſecution, Reproach, and raſh Judgments, when it comes to his own Turn to ſuffer on the Account of Religion: And certainly it is but *juſt* and *equal* that we ſhould allow to others the ſame Claims and Liberty of Conſcience which we think ought to be allowed to ourſelves.

Another of our natural Rights relates to our Lives and the Safety of our Perſons. Every Man hath a natural Right to his own Life, except he hath done ſomething to forfeit it, or except the public Good and the Intereſt of the Community require him to hazard or give it up; and conſequently he hath a Right, and is obliged, to maintain and preſerve his own Life by all fit and proper Means in his Power. And one of the greateſt Acts of *Injuſtice* that can be done by one Man to another is to deprive him, without a lawful Cauſe, of his Life; and in Proportion to do any Thing which tendeth thereunto, to aſſault his Perſon, to wound or hurt him, or to put him upon any Thing that hath a Tendency to deſtroy or impair his Health, or to deprive him of his Livelihood, and the Means of his Subſiſtence. It is an expreſs Command of the Decalogue, *Thou ſhalt not kill*. And this is

deſigned to forbid not only the groſs Act of Murder, but all unlawful Acts of Violence offered to the Perſons of others. And our Saviour, the authentic Interpreter of the Divine Law, extends it ſo far as to forbid and condemn *the being angry with our Brother without a Cauſe*. Matt. v. 21, 22. We are expreſly commanded *to put away from us all Bitterneſs, and Wrath, and Anger and all Malice*. Eph. iv. 31. On the contrary, we are obliged to do what we can to preſerve the Lives of others, as we would have others be ready to aſſiſt in preſerving ours; to protect their Perſons, as far as is in our Power; and to contribute to their Health and Safety.

Another natural Right relateth to our Properties and Poſſeſſions. Every Man hath a *juſt* Right to the Fruit of his own Labour and Induſtry, and to be undiſturbed in the Poſſeſſion and Uſe of thoſe Goods and Enjoyments which are become his by honeſt and lawful Means: And all Attempts to deprive him of them by Fraud or Force, and without the Command of lawful Authority, are *unjuſt*. To this the eighth Commandment of the Decalogue refers, *Thou ſhalt not ſteal*; which is not only intended to forbid Robbery and Theft, but all Defrauding and Over-reaching of our Neigh-

Neighbour in Bargains or Matters of Commerce, and all Extortion and Oppreſſion of him by taking Advantage of his Ignorance or Neceſſities. Many are the Precepts to this Purpoſe in the holy Scriptures: *Ye ſhall not oppreſs one another; but thou ſhalt fear thy God.* Levit. xxv. 17. *Thou ſhalt not defraud thy Neighbour, neither rob him; the Wages of him that is hired ſhall not abide with thee all Night until the Morning.* Lev. xix. 11, 13. *Ye ſhall do no Unrighteouſneſs in Judgment, in Mete-yard, in Weight, or in Meaſure.* Ibid. Ver. 35. *Let him that ſtole ſteal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the Thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.* Eph. iv. 28. The Divine Law forbiddeth even all inordinate Deſires after any Thing which belongeth to others. Remarkable to this Purpoſe is the tenth Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not covet thy Neighbour's Houſe, thou ſhalt not covet thy Neighbour's Wife, nor his Man-ſervant, nor his Maid-ſervant, nor his Ox, nor his Aſs, nor any Thing that is thy Neighbour's.* We muſt be ſo far from actually injuring others in wrongfully depriving them of any of their Poſſeſſions and Enjoyments, that we muſt not indulge any Thought or Inclination in our Hearts tending that Way. On the Contrary, we

ſhould

ſhould be ready, as we have Opportunity, to aſſiſt them in Preſerving their Properties and valuable Intereſts, and ſhould, inſtead of Grudging and Hindering, be forward to promote their lawful Gain, allowing them all reaſonable Advantages, as we would have others in the like Caſe to allow to us.

Our natural Rights alſo extend to the Preſerving of our Reputation or good Name. This is a moſt valuable Bleſſing which greatly contributes to inable a Man to go through Life with Comfort to himſelf, and Uſefulneſs to others. The wiſe Man declares, that *a good Name is rather to be choſen than great Riches.* Prov. xxii. 1. And therefore the Injuring a Man in this is at leaſt as great an *Injuſtice* as the Wronging him in his Property. Every Man hath a Right to have his Reputation unblemiſhed, till he has done ſomething to bring a Stain upon it; and therefore to defame him, to ſay or do any Thing which tends to detract from his Reputation without *juſt* Grounds, or needleſſly to expoſe him by open Calumny, or ſecret Whiſperings or Backbitings, or to endeavour to leſſen his Eſtimation by Ridicule, is doing him great Wrong, and is wounding him in a very ſenſible Part. This we all eaſily perceive

ceive in our own Caſe: And ſurely it is fit, that we ſhould be eſpecially careful of the Reputation of others, as we would have others be of ours; and that we ſhould not do any Thing cauſeleſſly to hurt or impair it. This ſeems to be one Thing intended in the ninth Commandment, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour.* And again it is ſaid, *Thou ſhalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among thy People.* Lev. xix. 16. *Speak not Evil one of another, Brethren. He that ſpeaketh Evil of his Brother, and judgeth his Brother, ſpeaketh Evil of the Law, and judgeth the Law.* Jam. iv. 11. And it is given as the Character of the Man *who ſhall abide in the Tabernacle of God, and dwell in his holy Hill,* that *he backbiteth not with his Tongue, nor doeth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach againſt his Neighbour.* Pſ. xv. 3.

This leads me to add, That, among thoſe Rights which are naturally due from others to us, and from us to others, may be alſo reckoned Truth which Men owe to one another, both in their Words and in their Actions. Every Man thinks he has a Right to expect from another that he ſhould ſpeak Truth to him, this being the proper End and Uſe of Speech; and a Lye has gene-

rally,

rally, in all Ages and Nations, been accounted a baſe Thing. For a Man to promiſe that which he intends not to perform, or, if he then intends it, to break it afterwards, when it is in his Power to perform it, is looked upon to be a Breach of the Rules of *Juſtice*; and a Man that is thus treated by another thinks he has a Right to complain that he is not fairly or *juſtly* dealt with. And it is certainly equally fit that he ſhould himſelf ſpeak Truth, and fulfil his Promiſes and Engagements to another Man, as that another ſhould do ſo to him. Truth ſhould ſhew itſelf, not only in our Words to each other, but in our Actions and whole Deportment. This lies at the Foundation of all Fidelity, and of that mutual Credit and Confidence, which is one of the ſtrongeſt Cements of Society. And accordingly it is frequently inſiſted upon in the Word and Law of God: *Whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are honeſt* or *venerable, whatſoever Things are juſt — think on theſe Things, i. e.* ſo as to practiſe them. *Phil.* iv. 8. *Ye ſhall not deal falſely, neither lye one to another.* Lev. xix. 11. *Putting away Lying, ſpeak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are Members one of another.* Eph. iv. 25. And in the Deſcription before referred

to,

to, it is mentioned as a neceſſary Part of a righteous Man's Character, that *he ſpeaketh the Truth in his* Heart, and that *he ſweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not.* Pſ. xv. 2, 4. He is true and faithful to his Engagements, even where the Keeping of them may ſeem to turn to his own Loſs and Damage.

Finally, all Men have a natural Right to be treated with Humanity, Kindneſs, and Decency, as being Partakers of the ſame common human Nature. This may be regarded as that which is *juſtly* due from all to all, and which hath it's Foundation in the natural Equality that is among all Men, conſidered as Men, all of the ſame Species, and originally of the ſame Stock and Family. Whatſoever Difference there may be between ſome of the human Race and others in their outward Stations and Circumſtances, for preſerving that Subordination which is ſo uſeful and neceſſary in Society, they ſhould never forget this. Men ſhould be treated by us as *of one Blood* with ourſelves, having Bodies alike framed and conſtituted, and Souls endued with the ſame natural Faculties and Powers; and therefore not with haughty Contempt and Diſdain, with Harſhneſs and Rigour, except

cept where their Conduct makes ſuch Uſage of them neceſſary. Accordingly the Scripture teacheth us *to honour all Men.* 1 Pet. ii. 17. And *to be gentle, ſhewing all Meekneſs unto all Men.* Tit. iii. 2. And *Gentleneſs* is reckoned among *the Fruits of the Spirit.* Gal. v. 22. There is ſuch a Reſpect due to all Men as Men, that we muſt not wilfully and cauſeleſſly affront or offend any Man. To this Purpoſe are thoſe Precepts: *Give none Offence, neither to the* Jews *nor to the* Gentiles. 1 Cor. x. 32. *Provide Things honeſt in the Sight of all Men.* And, *If it be poſſible, and as much as in you lieth, live peaceably with all Men.* Rom. xii. 17, 18.

The Rights that have been mentioned may be ſaid to be natural and fundamental Rights, in the Preſervation of which *Juſtice* doth eminently conſiſt: And it appears that great Care has been taken in the Divine Law, as delivered in the holy Scriptures, to oblige Men, in their Conduct towards one another, to ſhew an uniform Regard to all theſe.

There are alſo civil Rights ariſing from the Laws and Conſtitutions of the Community to which we belong, and Rights that reſult from particular Stations and Relations,

lations, Conditions and Circumſtances; to which we are obliged to have a due Regard if we would maintain the Character of *juſt* and *righteous* Perſons: And theſe I propoſe to conſider in my next Diſcourſe.

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XI.

PSALM cxix. 47.

I will delight myſelf in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

GOD, who is the wiſe and righteous Governor of the World, hath taken great Care, in his holy Law, to oblige Men to deal *juſtly* towards one another, *i. e.* that they ſhould endeavour to *render unto all their Dues*, and not do any Thing that tends to deprive any Man of his Rights, or to injure him in them.

Theſe Rights are of various Kinds. There are what may be called natural and fundamental Rights, or Rights belonging

to Men as Men, and which do not depend merely on civil Conſtitutions and Compacts: Some Account of theſe was given in my laſt Diſcourſe.

I now proceed to obſerve, Secondly, That there are civil Rights ariſing from the Laws and Conſtitutions of the Community or civil Government to which they are ſubject, or from particular Covenants, Stipulations, and Agreements: And theſe, as far as they are *juſt*, have a near Connection with the natural and fundamental Rights which have been mentioned. The proper Deſign of civil Government is to ſecure to Men their *juſt* Rights, to protect their Perſons, their Properties, and Reputations, from the Attempts of Fraud, Malice, and Violence; and to hinder them, as far as poſſible, from wronging and injuring one another. For this Purpoſe, there are in all civiliſed Countries Laws and Conſtitutions eſtabliſhed, in order to the Aſcertaining and Determining particular Rights conformably to the general Rules of *Juſtice*. The Forms and Regulations fixed upon may vary in different Communities, but the general Intention of them is the ſame. And it is fit and proper that thoſe Laws and Conſtitutions, thoſe Rules and Forms, ſhould be obſerved and

and ſubmitted to by the Members of ſuch Communities: For, by ſubjecting themſelves to civil Government, and enjoying it's Protection, they come under an Obligation, and in Effect enter into a Compact, to obſerve the Laws and Orders, which the Wiſdom and Authority of the State hath thought fit to appoint, for adjuſting and regulating Men's reſpective Rights, Claims, and Privileges. And, as it is the Will and Appointment of God that there ſhould be Government and Magiſtracy for the Preſervation of public Order, it may be juſtly ſaid, that the Divine Law, inſtead of weakening and vacating, ſtrengtheneth and confirmeth the Obligation of ſuch lawful civil Conſtitutions; and therefore it would be *unjuſt* to endeavour to deprive any Man of thoſe Rights, Privileges, or Emoluments, which, by virtue of ſuch civil Conſtitutions, are fairly due to him. But then it muſt be conſidered, that civil Laws are not adequate Rules of Right, nor muſt we flatter ourſelves that we always *do juſtly*, when we act up to the Letter of thoſe Laws. A Man may, in ſome Caſes, by rigorouſly exacting what, by virtue of the civil Laws and Conſtitutions, he may be ſaid to have a legal Title to, act a very harſh and cruel Part, con-

trary to the general Rules, not only of Charity and Mercy, but even of *Juſtice* too. And it cannot be denied, that there have been many Inſtances of Perſons who have taken Advantage of the Letter of civil Laws, in Oppoſition to the true Intention of them, to harraſs and oppreſs their honeſt Neighbours. We muſt therefore ſo regard civil Laws and Rights, as ſtill to have in View that ſuperior Rule of Duty, which obligeth us to deal kindly and equitably with all Men, *to love our Neighbours as ourſelves, and to do unto others as we would that they ſhould do unto us.*

But, Thirdly, There are Rights reſulting from particular Stations and Relations, Conditions and Circumſtances. It is evident that there is a great Variety in Men's outward Conditions in the World, and in the Relations they ſuſtain, and the Stations and Offices they fill in the Society, each of which have their reſpective Rights and Dues belonging to them. And in the regular Diſcharge of theſe relative Duties no ſmall Part of a *juſt* and *righteous* Conduct doth conſiſt: I ſhall therefore diſtinctly mention ſome of thoſe Relations, and the Duties and Rights appertaining to them.

The principal and moſt eminent is that between Magiſtrates, or the governing Powers

Powers of a Community, and their Subjects. Rulers and Magiſtrates, ſupreme and ſubordinate, in their ſeveral Stations, are *juſtly* intitled to our Submiſſion and dutiful Reſpect: They have a Right to have their lawful Commands obeyed, and their Dignity and Authority ſupported; And accordingly this is provided for in the Divine Law. Remarkable to this Purpoſe is that Paſſage of the Apoſtle *Paul*: *Let every Soul be ſubject to the higher Powers; for the Powers that be are ordained of God. Whoſoever therefore reſiſteth the Power, reſiſteth the Ordinance of God:— Ye muſt needs be ſubject, not only for Wrath, but for Conſcience-ſake.* Rom. xiii. 1, 2, 5. *Submit yourſelves* ſaith St. *Peter, to every Ordinance of Man for the Lord's Sake; whether it be the King as ſupreme, or unto Governors as unto them that are ſent by him for the Puniſhment of Evil-doers, and for the Praiſe of them that do well.* 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. To preſerve the Reſpect due to Magiſtracy and the civil Authority is the Deſign of that Precept, *Thou ſhalt not ſpeak Evil of the Ruler of thy People.* Exod. xxii. 28. Act. xxiii. 5. As we are commanded in general *to render unto all their Dues*, ſo, particularly, *Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Cuſtom to whom Cuſtom.*

Rom. xiii. 7. And our Saviour requires us *to render unto* Cæſar *the Things which are* Cæſar's, *and unto God the Things that are God's*. Matt. xxii. 21. On the other Hand the Subjects have a Right to be governed with *Equity*, and to be protected and ſecured by the ruling Powers in their valuable Privileges, Poſſeſſions, and Enjoyments, againſt *unjuſt* Oppreſſion, Violence and Fraud; ſince this is the very End for which civil Government was appointed. It is declared, that *the higher Powers are ordained of God* for this Purpoſe, that they ſhould be *a Terror, not to good Works, but to the Evil*; and that *they are the Miniſters of God for Good to him that doeth Good, and Revengers to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil*. Rom. xiii. 3, 4. *He that ruleth over Men muſt be juſt, ruling in the Fear of God*. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. It is the Command of God in the Divine Law to Rulers and Magiſtrates, *Ye ſhall do no Unrighteouſneſs in Judgment. Thou ſhalt not reſpect the Perſon of the Poor, or honour the Perſon of the Mighty; but in Righteouſneſs ſhalt thou judge thy Neighbour*. Lev. xix. 15. or, as it is expreſſed in *Deut*. i. 17, *Ye ſhall not reſpect Perſons in Judgment, but you ſhall hear the Small as well as the Great; you ſhall not be afraid*

afraid of the Fear of Man; for the Judgment is God's. And it is given as the Character of a good Prince, that *he ſhall judge the Poor of the People, he ſhall ſave the Children of the Needy, and ſhall break in Pieces the Oppreſſor.* Pſ. lxxii. 4.

There are alſo Rights reſulting from the Relations between Huſbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Maſters and Servants; and God hath obliged us in his Word and Law to act ſuitably to thoſe Rights, and to render what is reſpectively due in theſe ſeveral Relations.

They that are entered into the conjugal Relation are under ſpecial Obligations to treat one another with a mutual Tenderneſs and Complacency, to endeavour to promote their common Intereſt and Happineſs, and to ſhun whatſoever hath a Tendency to break the Union and Harmony which ſhould ſubſiſt between them; and, as far as they act contrary to this, they act *unjuſtly*, and in a Manner not ſuitable to the Obligations of the Marriage-Covenant. Particularly it is required of *Huſbands that they ſhould love their Wives, and not be bitter againſt them.* Col. iii. 19. That Paſſage of the Apoſtle *Paul* ſets this Duty of *Huſbands* in a very ſtrong and affecting Light: *Huſbands, love your Wives, even*

as Chriſt *loved the Church, and gave himſelf for it.—So ought Men to love their Wives, as their own Bodies; he that loveth his Wife loveth himſelf: For no Man ever yet hated his own Fleſh, but nouriſheth and cheriſheth it, even as the Lord the Church.* Eph. v. 25, 28, 29. *The Huſband* is declared to be *the Head of the Wife.* Eph. v. 23. And, as ſuch, is repreſented as having Authority; but then he ſhould exerciſe it with great Gentleneſs and the tendereſt Affection; which is admirably expreſſed by St. *Peter*, 1 Pet. iii. 7. *Ye Huſbands, dwell with them (i. e.* with your Wives) *according to Knowledge, giving Honour to the Wife, as to the weaker Veſſel, and as being Heirs together of the Grace of Life, that your Prayers be not hindered.* On the other Hand it is required of *Wives*, that *they ſhould ſubmit themſelves unto their own Huſbands, as it is fit in the Lord.* Col. iii. 18. Eph. v. 22. And that *they ſhould not uſurp Authority over them.* 1 Tim. ii. 12. That *they ſhould love their Huſbands, and be diſcreet, chaſte, keepers at Home, good, obedient to their own Huſbands, that the Word of God be not blaſphemed.* Tit. ii. 4, 5. And it is declared, that *the Wife hath not Power of her own Body, but the Huſband; and likewiſe*

alſo

alſo the Husband hath not Power of his own Body, but the Wife. 1 Cor .vii. 4.

With regard to the parental and filial Relation, *Parents* are obliged to treat their *Children* in a tender and affectionate Manner, and to exerciſe a proper Diſcipline over them, but not too harſh and rigorous; and to take due Care of their Education and Inſtruction. This is the Intention of thoſe Precepts: *Train up a Child in the Way he ſhould go; and, when he is old, he will not depart from it.* Prov. xxii. 6. *Ye Fathers, provoke not your Children to Wrath, viz.* by hard Uſage and immoderate Severity; *but bring them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord.* Eph. vi. 4. It is repreſented as the Part of *Parents to chaſten their Children, and to pity them, i. e.* to have Compaſſion on their Weakneſſes and Infirmities. *Deut.* viii. 5. *Pſ.* ciii. 13. and *to lay up*, or make ſuitable Proviſion, as far as they are able, *for their Children.* 2 *Cor.* xii. 14. And *Children* are obliged, on their Parts, to honour and reverence their *Parents*, to receive their good Inſtructions, to ſubmit to their Diſcipline, and not to be refractory and diſobedient: *A wiſe Son heareth the Inſtruction of his Father.* Prov. xiii. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord; for this is right. Ho-*

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nour thy Father and Mother, (which is the firſt Commandment with Promiſe) *that it may be well with thee, and thou mayeſt live long on the Earth.* Eph. vi. 1, 2, 3. *Let Children learn firſt to ſhew Piety at Home, and requite their Parents, viz.* by making the beſt Returns they are capable of, for their Tenderneſs and Care, and by aſſiſting and ſupporting them, to the utmoſt of their Power, if they ſhould ſtand in need of it; *for this is good and acceptable before God.* 1 Tim. v. 4.

The Divine Law hath alſo provided for ſecuring the Rights of *Maſters* and *Servants* by obliging them to a proper Conduct towards one another: *Thou ſhalt not oppreſs an hired Servant that is poor and needy—At his Day thou ſhalt give him his Hire.* Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. *Maſters, give unto your Servants that which is juſt and equal, knowing that ye alſo have a Maſter in Heaven.* Col. iv. 1. Or, as it is expreſſed in *Eph.* vi. 9, *Ye Maſters, do the ſame Things unto them*, i. e. do what is *juſt* and *right* to your *Servants*, as you would have them deal *juſtly* towards you; *forbearing Threatening; knowing that your Maſter alſo is in Heaven, neither is there any Reſpect of Perſons with him.* On the other Hand, the Duty of *Servants* is thus excellently

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ſet forth: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your Maſters according to the Fleſh, with Fear and Trembling, in Singleneſs of Heart, as unto* Chriſt; *not with Eye-ſervice as Men-pleaſers, but as the Servants of* Chriſt, *doing the Will of God from the Heart; with Good-will doing Service, as to the Lord, and not to Men; knowing that whatſoever good Thing any Man doeth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.* Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8. And, again, *Servants* are required and exhorted *to be obedient unto their own Maſters, and to pleaſe them well in all Things; not anſwering again, nor purloining, but ſhewing all good Fidelity, that they may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things.* Tit. ii. 9, 10.

There are alſo mutual Rights and Obligations ariſing from the Relation between *Paſtors* and their *Flocks*. *Paſtors* are required *to feed the Flock of God which is among them, taking the Overſight thereof, not by Conſtraint, but willingly; not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind; neither as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Examples of the Flock.* 1 Pet. v. 2, 3. *And to watch for their Souls, as they that muſt give an Account.* Heb. xiii. 17. *To preach the Word; to be inſtant in Seaſon, out of Seaſon; to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with*

with all Long-ſuffering and Doctrine. 2 Tim. iv. 2. And *the People*, on their Parts, are required *to know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admoniſh them; and to eſteem them very highly in Love for their Works Sake.* 1 Theſſ. v. 12, 13. *To count them worthy of double Honour.* 1 Tim. v. 17. *To obey and ſubmit themſelves to them, i. e.* to pay a due Regard to their paſtoral Inſtructions and Admonitions, *that they may give an Account with Joy, and not with Grief.* Heb. xiii. 17. And to make a proper Proviſion for their Maintenance: *Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good Things.* Gal. vi. 6. And it is expreſsly declared, that *the Lord hath ordained, that they which preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel.* 1 Cor. ix. 14.

It may be added, that a proper Regard ſhould alſo be had to that great Variety of Conditions and Circumſtances which is obſervable among Mankind. Some there are who are diſtinguiſhed from others by the Splendor of their Condition, by their Intereſt and Influence, and the honourable Rank they bear in the Community; and ſuch Perſons are intitled to a proportionable Degree of Honour and Reſpect. And accordingly,

accordingly, as we are commanded in the Divine Law *to render to all their Dues*, ſo particularly *to give Honour to thoſe to whom Honour is due*. Rom. xiii. 7. A juſt Regard ſhould be alſo paid to them that are eminent for their Abilities, for their Wiſdom and Virtue, their Age and Experience. *The Younger* are required *to ſubmit themſelves unto the Elder*. 1 Pet. v. 5. And this holdeth proportionably for our carrying it reſpectfully towards all that are our Superiors, according to the Nature and Degree of their Superiority. And, on the other Hand, an affable, obliging, condeſcending Temper and Deportment, remote from contemptuous Pride and Arrogance, is as *juſtly* due from Superiors to thoſe who are in any Degree their Inferiors, as a proper Honour and Reſpect is due from Inferiors to them: It is required *of thoſe who are rich in this World*, that *they be not high-minded*. 1 Tim. vi. 17. And this is equally applicable to thoſe who are poſſeſſed of any other Advantages or Diſtinctions. It is alſo juſtly expected from them, that they ſhould uſe their Talents and Advantages for the Good of others. This is not merely left to their own Choice; it is what *Juſtice* and *the Law of God* demandeth. The Obligation Men are under

der to do this is ſtrongly and ſignificantly repreſented by our Lord in the *Parables* of the *Talents* and of the *Pounds*. Matt. xxv. 14—30. Luke xix. 13—26. And it is expreſsly declared, that *unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required.* Luke xii. 48.

Thus it appears, that our *Doing juſtly* includes in it a diligent and faithful Diſcharge of the Duties and Offices incumbent upon us in the ſeveral Stations and Relations in which the Divine Providence hath placed us. And even Gratitude may come under the general Notion of *Juſtice*, ſince Benefits received lay thoſe that receive them under Obligations to their Benefactors, which they are bound in *Juſtice* to diſcharge, as far as lieth in their Power; at leaſt by their Prayers for them, and by thankful Acknowledgments, when they have not an Opportunity of making any other Returns. This is ſo evidently *juſt*, that our Lord obſerves, that even *Sinners*, thoſe who do not pretend to any extraordinary Degree of Goodneſs or Righteouſneſs, yet think themſelves obliged *to love thoſe that love them*, and *to do Good to them that do Good to them.* Luke vi. 32, 33.

It is manifeſt, from the Account which hath been given, that that Part of our Duty towards our Neighbour which is comprehended in our *doing juſtly* is of very great Extent. It alſo appears that it is the excellent Deſign of the Divine Law to preſerve to all Men their *juſt* Rights, and to oblige them in all Reſpects to maintain an *equal* and *righteous* Conduct towards their Fellow-creatures, and to behave properly to one another in all the Variety of Conditions and Circumſtances: And this is evidently conducive both to the Welfare and good Order of Society, and to the Satisfaction and Happineſs of purticular Perſons who exerciſe themſelves this Way. With what Pleaſure therefore ſhould we ſet ourſelves to obey this Part of the Divine Law? God hath ſo conſidered our Nature, that no Man, except he be perverted and hardened to a great Degree, can knowingly do an *unjuſt* Thing to others without condemning himſelf, and being ſubjected to an inward Shame and Remorſe, and to the Reproaches of his own Mind. And on the Contrary, as far as he is conſcious of having obſerved a *juſt* and *equitable* Conduct towards all Men as he had Opportunity, and of having faithfully diſcharged the Duties of his Station

Station and Relations, he hath the Approbation of his own Heart, which produceth an inward Pleaſure and Satisfaction, and inableth him to lift up his Face without Shame, and with an ingenuous noble Confidence. How happy would it be for Mankind, if the Practice of *Juſtice* and *Righteouſneſs* univerſally prevailed! If Men were generally as careful of the Rights of others, as they would have others be of theirs! And were as unwilling to injure others in their Perſons, in their Characters and Properties, or whatſoever Enjoyments are dear and valuable to them, as they would be to have themſelves injured in any of theſe Reſpects! If Rulers and Subjects, Huſbands and Wives, Parents and Children, Maſters and Servants, Paſtors and their Flocks, and in general Superiors, Inferiors, and Equals, in their ſeveral Stations, Conditions, and Degrees, were careful to fulfil the Offices incumbent upon them in the civil and ſocial Life, and which the Divine Law injoins! If this were the general State of Things, what a beautiful Order would be maintained in the World! Society would be a pleaſant harmonious Thing. The Confuſions, Contentions, and Miſchiefs, which infeſt Man-

Mankind, are owing to the Breach of theſe excellent Rules; and all good human Laws are deſigned, as far as their Influence reacheth, to engage Men to the Obſervance of them. But the beſt Laws which human Wiſdom can contrive are in many Reſpects deficient, and at the utmoſt extend only to the outward Actions. A Man may ſo far keep from the open Breach of civil Laws, as not to be chargable with *Injuſtice* before any earthly Tribunal, or liable to be puniſhed by human Governments, and yet not be a *juſt* and *righteous* Man in the Sight of God. It is the Divine Law alone which taketh in all Caſes, and regulateth even the moſt ſecret Diſpoſitions and Inclinations of the Heart.

I would conclude with Obſerving, that the beſt and readieſt Way we can take to be *juſt* to all is to get our Hearts formed to a benevolent Diſpoſition towards all Men: *Owe no Man any Thing*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the Law: For this, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery, Thou ſhalt not kill, Thou ſhalt not ſteal, Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs, Thou ſhalt not covet; and, if there be any other Commandment*, *i. e.* any other Commandment relating to

the Duties we owe one another, *it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf. Love worketh no Ill to his Neighbour; therefore Love is the Fulfilling of the Law.* Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10. If our Hearts be poſſeſſed with Love to Mankind, it will effectually keep us from injuring them, and will cauſe us to take a Pleaſure *in rendering them their juſt Dues*, and conſequently will engage us to the Exerciſe of *Juſtice*; and not only ſo, but of *Charity* and *Mercy* too. And what is included in this I ſhall endeavour to ſhew in my next Diſcourſe.

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XII.

PSALM CXIX. 47.

I will delight myſelf in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

SUCH is the Goodneſs of God towards us, and his Concern for our Happineſs, that one eminent Part of the Divine Law is deſigned to oblige us to the Exerciſe of ſocial Affections, and thoſe Offices by which we may be mutually helpful to one another. Theſe, as hath been obſerved, may be ranked under two comprehenſive Heads, *Juſtice* and *Charity*, between which, when rightly underſtood, there is a very cloſe Connexion. There

can be no true Exerciſe of *Charity* without *Juſtice*; nor can *Juſtice*, taken in it's full Extent, be really ſeparated from *Charity* and *Benevolence*: For *Love* may be regarded as a Debt which is due from us to our Neighbour, as the Apoſtle ſignifies in that remarkable Manner of Expreſſion, *Owe no Man any Thing, but to love one another*. Rom. xiii. 8. The *Shewing Mercy* to our Fellow-creatures, as well as Acting juſtly towards them, cometh under that comprehenſive Rule which our Lord hath preſcribed: *All Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*. Matt. vii. 12.

But yet theſe are of diſtinct Conſideration. *Juſtice*, ſtrictly ſpeaking, keepeth us from Wronging or Offering any Injury to our Neighbour, or Invading any of his juſt Rights: But *Charity* carrieth it farther, and engageth us not only to abſtain from Injuring our Neighbour, but to do him all the Good that is in our Power. This is no leſs expreſsly required of us than the former, and is in a particular Manner inſiſted on by our Saviour, the great authentic Interpreter of the Divine Will and Law, who came to explain and inforce it in it's true Perfection and Extent. He calls the Commandment of

Love,

Love, or *Charity*, *his own Commandment*. John xv. 12. *This is my Commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.* And, elſewhere, he ſpeaks of it as *a new Commandment, which he gave to his Diſciples.* John xiii. 34. Not as if it were abſolutely unknown before: For it was an important Part of the Law of God *from the Beginning, Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf.* Lev. xix. 18. But our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* hath placed it in a more affecting Light, and hath inforced it by new and more powerful Arguments and Motives than was ever done before. Indeed it is ſo frequently recommended and inculcated in the Evangelical Diſpenſation, that the Goſpel-Law may be properly called *the Law of Love:* We are commanded *to follow after Charity, i. e.* to purſue it, and endeavour to make a conſtant Progreſs in it. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 1. It is repreſented as the moſt excellent of *Chriſtian* Virtues, greater than *Faith* and *Hope*, and as that without which all other Gifts and Attainments, and the moſt ſpecious Pretences to Religion, are vain and of no Avail. 1 *Cor.* xiii. 1, 2, 13. The Apoſtle, after having mentioned ſeveral virtuous Affections and Diſpoſitions, adds, *Above all Things put on Charity, which is*

the Bond of Perfectneſs. It is the ſacred *Bond* which unites them together, and whereby they attain to their proper Perfection. *Col.* iii. 14. And it is declared, that *the End of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and of a good Conſcience, and of Faith unfeigned.* 1 Tim. i. 5.

As to the Nature of this *Charity*, on which ſo great a Streſs is laid in the Word and Law of God, it hath it's proper Foundation in ſuch a hearty Love and Goodwill towards our Fellow-creatures and *Fellow-Chriſtians*, as cauſeth us earneſtly to deſire their Happineſs. St. *Paul* fitly expreſſeth it by our *being kindly affectioned one to another.* Rom. xii. 10. But, though it is originally founded in the good Affection and Diſpoſition of the Heart, it doth not reſt there: It is not merely an inactive Benevolence, reaching no farther than kind Wiſhes and Inclinations, but produceth ſuitable Effects both in the Words and in the Actions.

It ſhews itſelf in the Words by kind and gentle Language, and by abſtaining from harſh and reproachful, from arrogant and contemptuous Expreſſions, which only tend to irritate and provoke. The Pſalmiſt ſpeaks of Perſons *who bend their Tongues*

Tongues like a Bow to ſhoot their Arrows, even bitter Words. Pſ. lxiv. 3. But very different from this is the Character of thoſe in whom *Charity* is the reigning Principle: It will cauſe them to put the beſt Conſtruction upon the Actions and Intentions of others which the Caſe will bear; and, if it be neceſſary to reprove them, the Rebukes of *Charity* will be *like excellent Oil*, to uſe the Pſalmiſt's Expreſſions, *which ſhall not break the Head.* Pſ. cxli. 5. Soft and mild Words, when they are not the Cover of Deceit and Guile, but proceed from a ſincere and benevolent Heart, have a natural Tendency to turn away Wrath, to allay the Paſſions of the Headſtrong, and to ſoothe afflicted Minds. Accordingly it is required of us, that we be *courteous, not rendering Railing for Railing, but contrariwiſe Bleſſing.* 1 Pet. iii. 8, 9. *Let your Speech be ſeaſoned with Grace, ſaith* St. *Paul*, Col. iv. 6. What is ſaid of the *virtuous Woman* ſhould be the Character of every good and religious Perſon, *In her Tongue is the Law of Kindneſs.* Prov. xxxi. 26.

But, though good and kind Words are juſtly required from us as proper and genuine Expreſſions of our *Charity*, yet theſe alone are not ſufficient: *My little Children,*

ſaith St. *John*, *let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue*, *i. e.* not in theſe only, *but in Deed and in Truth.* 1 John iii. 18. For, as the Apoſtle *James* properly obſerves, *If a Brother or Siſter be naked and deſtitute of daily Food; and one of you ſay unto them, Depart in Peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithſtanding ye give them not thoſe Things which are needful to the Body; what doth it profit?* James ii. 15, 16. Our *Charity* towards others muſt ſhew itſelf by a Readineſs to do them real Services, when we have an Opportunity for it, in that Way in which we can be moſt uſeful to them, and which beſt anſwers to our Abilities, and to the Neceſſities of their Caſe.

The Actions, by which we are to exerciſe our *Charity* and *Good-will* towards our Fellow-creatures and *Fellow-Chriſtians*, are principally of two Kinds; the doing Good to their Bodies and to their Souls.

The nobleſt Exerciſe of *Charity* is that which is employed in doing Good to the Souls of Men, and Promoting their ſpiritual and eternal Welfare. We ſhould, as we have Opportunity, uſe our beſt Endeavours *to convert Sinners from the Evil of their Ways*, to recover them from Error and Ignorance, Vice and Wickedneſs; and

and help forward their Advances in Wiſdom and Holineſs by ſeaſonable Inſtructions and Admonitions, by giving them good Examples, and furniſhing them, as far as our Influence reacheth, with the Means of ſpiritual and moral Improvement. The Miniſters and Paſtors of the Church are under ſpecial Obligations by their Office *to watch over Souls*; and the proper End of their Miniſtrations is *to ſave themſelves and thoſe that hear them.* 1 Tim. iv. 16. But we muſt not imagine that the Care of Promoting the Salvation of Souls is intirely confined to them: It is a Duty incumbent upon all *Chriſtians* to contribute, as far as in them lies, towards Spreading the Intereſts of Religion in the World, and to aſſiſt each other in the Knowledge and Practice of *Chriſtianity*. This is the Deſign of thoſe excellent Precepts, *Comfort yourſelves together, and edify one another*, 1 Theſſ. v. 11. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, leſt any of you be hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin.* Heb. iii. 13. *Let us conſider one another, to provoke unto Love and to good Works, not forſaking the Aſſembling of ourſelves together, as the Manner of ſome is; but exhorting one another.* Heb. x. 24, 25. *Let your Light ſo ſhine before Men, that*

that they may ſee your good Works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven. Matt. v. 16.

Not only muſt our *Charity* extend it's Care to the Souls of Men, but to their Bodies too, and to their temporal Concernments. We muſt not, as Men of perſecuting Spirits have often done, under the Pretence of Zeal for Religion, and for the Salvation of Men's Souls, exerciſe Cruelty upon their Bodies, and injure them in their worldly Affairs and Intereſts. When *the Diſciples* would have called for *Fire from Heaven to conſume the* Samaritans, whom they regarded as Heretics and Schiſmatics, our Lord gave them that remarkable Rebuke, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirit ye are of: For the Son of God is not come to deſtroy Men's Lives, but to ſave them.* Luke ix. 55, 56. That moſt benevolent Saviour and Lover of Mankind *went about, in the Days of his Fleſh, doing Good* to the Bodies as well as Souls of Men. That *Charity*, which obligeth us *to love our Neighbours as ourſelves*, will put us upon doing kind Offices with reſpect to the Neceſſaries and Accommodations of this preſent Life, and will make us ready, according to our Ability, to ſupply their Wants, and relieve their Diſtreſſes. Many

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are the Paſſages to this Purpoſe which occur in the Sacred Writings: It may ſuffice to mention one, *Iſ.* lviii. 6, 7, where God declares by his Prophet, *Is not this the Faſt which I have choſen? To looſe the Bands of Wickedneſs, to undo the heavy Burdens, and to let the Oppreſſed go free, and that ye break every Yoke? Is it not to deal thy Bread to the Hungry, and that thou bring the Poor that are caſt out to thy Houſe? When thou ſeeſt the Naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyſelf from thine own Fleſh?*

But, that we may have a clearer Notion of that *Charity* which is ſo indiſpenſably required of us in the Divine Law, it will be proper more diſtinctly to conſider the Objects about which it is converſant, and the various Ways in which it muſt be exerciſed towards thoſe Objects.

The Objects to which our *Charity* muſt extend are all Men in general, as far as Opportunity offereth. This is admirably illuſtrated by our Saviour in the *Parable* of the good *Samaritan*, who performed the moſt friendly Offices to a *Jew* in Diſtreſs, notwithſtanding the religious Differences, and bitter Animoſities, which had long ſubſiſted between the *Jews* and *Samaritans*. This *Parable* was deſigned by

by our Lord in Anſwer to the Queſtion propoſed to him by a *Jewiſh* Doctor of Law, whom we are to underſtand by *our Neighbour* in that Precept, *Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf?* And, as that Doctor could not deny that the *Samaritan* had acted the Part of *a kind Neighbour* towards the diſtreſſed *Jew*, and that the Aſſiſtance he gave him was a laudable Action, and ſhewed great Goodneſs of Heart, it followed, that it muſt alſo be a good and worthy Action in a *Jew* to behave in the ſame Manner towards a *Samaritan* in the like Circumſtances. *Luke* x. 29—37. Agreeable to this Doctrine of our Lord are the Precepts given by his Apoſtles under the Direction of his Spirit: It is expreſsly required of us, that *we ſhould be ready, as we have Opportunity, to do good unto all Men.* Gal. vi. 10. And that *we ſhould follow that which is good*, both among ourſelves and unto all Men. 1 Theſſ. v. 15. Our Benevolence muſt be univerſal, not limited to any particular Sect or Party, but muſt flow abroad, as far as we are able, to all that are Partakers of the ſame human Nature with ourſelves, ſo as to be ready to ſerve them in the kind Offices of Humanity, and to promote their real Welfare, temporal and ſpiritual, as far as is in

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our Power; and, when we can do no more for them, we ſhould at leaſt give them an Intereſt in our kind Wiſhes and in our Prayers. And accordingly it is appointed, that *Prayers, Supplications, Interceſſions, and Giving of Thanks, be made for all Men*; and this in Conformity to the Will of God, *who would have all Men to be ſaved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth.* 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

But, although our *Charity* muſt extend to all Men in general, as far as we have an Opportunity for it, yet it doth not exert itſelf towards all with equal Force, but muſt be exerciſed towards them in various Proportions and Degrees. And indeed, however general and diffuſive our benevolent Diſpoſition may be, our Power of actually doing Good is confined comparatively to a few, and, for the moſt Part, to thoſe that come under our own particular Notice and Cogniſance. With reſpect to the far greater Part of Mankind, our Benevolence for Want of Opportunity is inactive, and is little more than a fair Idea or kind Inclination. Some there are with whom we have more particular Connections; to whom we are nearly united by Ties of Conſanguinity or Affinity, or by an intimate Acquaintance or Friendſhip: Such

Such Perſons, if other Circumſtances be equal, and if there be no particular Reaſon to the Contrary, are to be preferred to thoſe who are more remote, ſo as to have a larger Share in the Effects of our Benevolence. This is what Nature and Providence ſeem to direct to, and hence the Apoſtle determineth, that, *if any provide not for his own, and eſpecially for thoſe of his own Houſe, he hath denied the Faith, and is worſe than an Infidel.* 1 Tim. v. 8. And, if we conſider the Matter aright, we ſhall find that it is neceſſary for the general Good, that every Man ſhould look upon himſelf to be, ordinarily, and in the firſt Place, obliged to ſhew Kindneſs to thoſe to whom he is moſt nearly related, or with whom he hath a particular Connexion and Intimacy, though not to them only: For, if every Man thus endeavoured to do Good within his own narrower Circle, and at the ſame Time was ready, as Occaſion offered, for Acts of more extenſive Benevolence, the Good of the Whole would be effectually promoted: Whereas a mere general Good-will exerciſed towards all in an equal Degree, and inclining to do no more for one than another, would in Reality and Effect be of little Advantage to any.

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It muſt farther be obſerved, in order to our having a right View of *Charity* in it's Operations and Effects, that it is variouſly exerciſed towards Men, according to their different Conditions and Circumſtances; according to their different Characters, whether good or bad; and according to their different Diſpoſitions and Actings towards us, whether as Friends and Benefactors, or as Enemies and Injurious.

Let us conſider it in each of theſe Views.

Charity is diverſified in it's Workings and Effects, according to the different Conditions and Circumſtances of thoſe with whom we have to do. Towards thoſe who are in proſperous Circumſtances it will expreſs itſelf by rejoicing in their Welfare, and being ready by all proper Means to promote it. Nothing can be more inconſiſtent with *Charity*, than to grudge and repine at the Advantages and Proſperity of our Neighbour: *Charity envieth not.* 1 Cor. xiii. 4. On the Contrary, it will cauſe us to take real Satisfaction in the Abilities, Reputation, or Uſefulneſs of others, and in any happy Event which hath befallen them: Accordingly we are required to *rejoice with them that do re-*

rejoice. Rom. xii. 15. And, as to those that are under Adversity and Affliction, many are the Ways in which *Charity* exerciseth itself towards them: If they are in Grief, it will engage us to sympathise with them, and to do what we can to alleviate their Sorrows: If they be in very indigent Circumstances, it will make us willing to contribute, as far as we are able, for supplying their Wants: If they be perplexed, it will incline us to give them our best Counsel and Advice: If they be dejected, to raise and encourage them: If oppressed, to assist and relieve them. There are many Precepts to this Purpose in the holy Scriptures: We are commanded *to bear one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ*. Gal. vi. 2. *to weep with them that weep*. Rom. xii. 15. *to comfort the Feeble-minded*. 1 Thess. v. 14. *to remember those that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer Adversity, as being ourselves also in the Body*. Heb. xiii. 2. It is declared that *pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the Widows and Fatherless in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World*. Jam. i. 27. An eminent Instance of active *Charity* in Succouring the Distressed we have in

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that excellent Perſon *Job*, who, from the *Teſtimony of a good Conſcience*, could give that noble Account of his own Conduct: *I delivered the Poor that cried, the Fatherleſs, and him that had none to help him. The Bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh came upon me, and I cauſed the Widow's Heart to ſing for Joy.—I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor.* Job. xxix. 12, 13, 15, 16.

And, as *Charity* ſuiteth itſelf to their various Conditions and Circumſtances, ſo it is differently exerciſed towards them according to their different Characters, whether good or bad. With regard to good Men, it will cauſe us to embrace them with a cordial Affection and Eſteem, and to love them moſt in whom we diſcern moſt of the amiable Image of God and our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. We are required, *as we have Opportunity, to do Good unto all Men, but eſpecially unto them who are of the Houſhold of Faith.* Gal. vi. 10. Our Goodneſs ſhould extend, in a particular Manner, *to the Saints that are in the Earth, and to the Excellent, in whom our Delight ſhould be*, as the Pſalmiſt tells us his was. Pſ. xvi. 2, 3. This ſpecial Affection towards good Men is expreſſed in the New Teſtament by *brotherly Love*, or *brotherly*

neſs. To this thoſe Precepts refer, *Let brotherly Love continue.* Heb. xiii. 1, *Having your Souls purified unto unfeigned Love of the Brethren, ſee that ye love one another with a pure Heart fervently.* 1 Pet. i. 22. The Miſtakes and Defects we obſerve in them ſhould not interrupt this ſacred *brotherly* Communion. We muſt be ready to bear with their Weakneſſes and Infirmities, and, when we ſee it neceſſary to reprove them, we ſhould do it in ſuch a Manner as may ſhew that it proceeds from Love and a real Concern for their Welfare, and not from a Spirit of Pride or Bitterneſs. Such well-tempered Reproofs are true Acts of *Charity*. Remarkable to this Purpoſe is that Precept, *Lev.* xix. 17. *Thou ſhalt not hate thy Brother in thy Heart; thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Neighbour, and not ſuffer Sin upon him.* *Brethren,* ſaith St. *Paul, if a Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thyſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.* Gal. vi. 1. If our *Fellow-Chriſtians* differ from us in Opinion, with Relation to ſome Points of Doctrine, or Rites and Modes of Worſhip, this ought not to hinder our Regarding and Treating them as Brethren, when we have Reaſon to think

think they *ſerve God in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, and have their Fruit unto Holineſs*. *Charity* in ſuch a Caſe teacheth us to make all proper Allowances for the Biaſs of Education, and for Men's different Capacities, Opportunities, and Means of Improvement; and not be too rigid in our Cenſures for real or ſuppoſed Errors: *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, but not to doubtful Diſputations. Let us not judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no Man put a Stumbling-Block, or an Occaſion to fall in his Brother's Way.* Let us *follow after the Things which make for Peace, and Things wherewith we may edify one another*. Rom. xiv. 1, 13, 19. *Walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith ye are called, with all Lowlineſs and Meekneſs, with Long-ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love, endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*. Eph. iv. 1, 2, 3.

With regard to bad or wicked Men continuing ſuch, *Charity* doth not oblige us to cultivate a ſpecial Intimacy with them, or to make them our choſen Companions; which might indanger our own Purity and Virtue: But it ſhould ſhew itſelf by Pitying their Perſons, at the ſame Time that we abhor their Vices; by a

Readineſs to aſſiſt them in their Diſtreſſes, and perform to them the kind Offices of Humanity; by praying for them, by admoniſhing them; as far as we have Opportunity; and by doing what we can to convince them of their Guilt and Danger, and to turn them from their evil Courſes. To encourage us to do this, it is declared, that *he which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins.* James v. 19, 20. We are required *to warn them that are unruly.* 1 Theſſ. v. 14. And, on the other Hand, though they have been among the greateſt of Sinners, yet, if we obſerve in them any Diſpoſitions to repent, and forſake their evil Ways, *Charity* ſhould put us upon doing all in our Power for Aſſiſting and Encouraging them to do ſo: For we are aſſured, that *the Lord is long-ſuffering to us-ward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to Repentance.* 2 Pet. iii. 9. which is admirably exemplified in the *Parable* of the *returning Prodigal.*

Finally, *Charity* may be conſidered, as exerciſed both towards our Friends and Benefactors, and towards our Enemies and them that have injured us. With regard to our Benefactors, thoſe who have ſhewn

us great Kindneſs, and from whom we have received Favours and Benefits, it will exert itſelf in the generous Emotions of a grateful Temper. Gratitude may, as was obſerved in a former Diſcourſe, come under the Notion of *Juſtice*, as it includes a Making thoſe Returns which are juſtly due for Benefits received. But, in a Soul that is under the Influence of an enlarged Benevolence, it is carried beyond mere Juſtice, and is heightened into a noble Generoſity of Mind, which will be deſirous, if poſſible, of rendering more than an Equivalent, and will cauſe the Heart to overflow in grateful, in friendly Affections.

As to our Enemies, and thoſe that have uſed us ill, *Charity* doth not oblige us to treat them with the ſame Endearments of Affection as we do our Friends and Benefactors: But it ſhould exert itſelf towards them by a Readineſs to forgive and be reconciled to them, in Oppoſition to a bitter implacable Reſentment and Retaliation of Injuries. We muſt not repay them in their own Way by returning one injurious Word and Action for another, nor ſhould we rejoice in their Miſery. Inſtead of Curſing we ſhould offer up our Prayers to God for them; not indeed for Succeſs in

their evil Courses, but for their Converſion and Amendment, rather than their Ruin; and we ſhould do what we can to bring them to a better Temper of Mind, an to overcome their Enmity *by returning Good for Evil*, which is the nobleſt Conqueſt. This is the Deſign of thoſe admirable Precepts, *Love your Enemies, bleſs them that curſe you, do Good to them that hate you, and pray for them that deſpitefully uſe you, and perſecute you.* Matt. v. 44. *Thou ſhalt not avenge, nor bear any Grudge againſt the Children of thy People.* Lev. xix. 18. *Recompenſe to no Man Evil for Evil. Dearly Beloved, avenge not yourſelves, but rather give Place unto Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, ſaith the Lord. Therefore, if thine Enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirſt, give him Drink; for in ſo doing thou ſhalt heap Coals of Fire on his Head. Be not overcome of Evil, but overcome Evil with Good.* Rom. xii. 17, 19, 20, 21. There is ſcarce any Thing that our Saviour more expreſsly inſiſteth upon than *Forgiveneſs of Injuries*, which he repreſents as the indiſpenſable Condition of our Obtaining *the Forgiveneſs of our own Sins from God.* Matt. vi. 14, 15. And of this he himſelf hath given the moſt perfect Example: With his expiring

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Breath he offered up his Prayers to his *heavenly Father* for thoſe who were then embruing their Hands in his ſacred Blood: *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* Luke xxiii. 34.

What has been hitherto offered relates principally to the Conduct which *Charity* requireth of us towards particular Perſons; and the ſame excellent Principle will engage us to endeavour to promote, as far as we are able, the Welfare and Proſperity of large Communities, in which that of many particular Perſons is involved. It will produce in us a noble Public-ſpiritedneſs, a generous Concern for the extenſive Intereſts of the *Chriſtian* Church, and for the Good of all Mankind in general, and of our Country in particular; not that partial Love to our Country, which cauſeth us to deſpiſe all others, and to be willing to oppreſs and inſlave them for exalting our own; but ſuch a Love to our Country, as will put us upon Doing what we can to promote the common Welfare, and will cauſe us to contribute towards it by all proper Means in our Power.

Charity appears, upon the View that has been taken of it, to be of a very comprehenſive Extent; and it is directly oppoſed to that inordinate Selfiſhneſs, that

narrow contracted Diſpoſition of Soul, which is for Confining it's Regards and Views to it's own private Intereſt and Advantage. It argues a true Goodneſs and noble Enlargedneſs of Heart, and well deſerves the Encomiums beſtowed upon it by St. *Paul*, in his admirable Deſcription of it in the xiiith Chapter of his firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*.

I ſhall conclude with two Obſervations, which naturally ariſe from what has been offered upon this Subject.

The one is, that the *Charity*, required in the Divine Law, in Proportion as it prevails, tends to render Perſons uſeful to Society, and Bleſſings to all around them, as far as their Influence reacheth. Princes, if they were animated with this Divine Principle, would become Fathers of their Country; Men of great Power and Intereſt would be active in employing it for the public Welfare: Thoſe that are *rich in this World* would be *rich in good Works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate*; and even they who are comparatively in poor and mean Circumſtances would learn to be contented, and ſhew their Good-will to others *in Word and Deed*, as far as lies in their Power. To which it may be added, that *Charity* hath a natural Tendency

dency to cherish and promote that Peace and Concord, which is of great Moment to the common Happiness, and to root out of Men's Tempers that Pride, and Envy, and Bitterness of Spirit, which renders them intractable and contentious, and Nuisances to Society. It will engage us to put the most favourable Construction upon the Words and Actions of others, and he will make us careful not to do any Thing needlessly to provoke, or give them Offence. Thus shall we answer the Intention of those Evangelical Precepts: *Be ye of one Mind*, *i. e.* be ye united in the same friendly Affection one towards another; *live in Peace*; *and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you*. 2 Cor. xiii. 10. *Follow Peace with all Men, and Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord*. Heb. xii. 14.

The other Observation is, that *Charity* tends not only to render Persons useful to others, but happy in themselves. All the Duties which have been mentioned, as comprehended under the general Name and Notion of *Charity*, are only the various Effects and Flowings forth of Love and Benevolence: And Love carrieth Delight in it's Nature and Exercise. That Soul hath certainly an inward Source of Plea-

sure,

ſure, in which this noble Diſpoſition dwells. The Pleaſure of *doing Good*, which is the Subſtance of the Duties required of us towards our Neigbour, is among the greateſt our Natures are capable of. We are ſo conſtituted that, in pitying and relieving the Neceſſities of others, we refreſh our own Bowels; and we cannot promote their Happineſs, but at the ſame Time, by the Satisfaction ariſing from it, we really promote our own. May I not appeal to thoſe who have exerciſed themſelves this Way? Have you not found an inward conſcious Pleaſure, when you have *drawn out your Soul to the Hungry, and ſatisfied the afflicted Soul?* When you have been inſtrumental in giving Eaſe to the Miſerable, and your Fellow-Creatures have rejoiced through your Means, have not you felt a ſecret Complacency within, their Joys tranſfuſed into your own Breaſts? And, the more diffuſed the Benevolence is, the more enlarged is the Joy, reſembling in ſome Meaſure that which the ſupreme Being taketh in the free Communications of his own Goodneſs. Let Reaſon, impartial Reaſon, judge, which leads the happier Life, and enjoys moſt of a true Satisfaction, the Man whoſe generous Heart is filled with

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Benevolence towards Mankind, or that is under the Influence of a mean Selfishness and narrow sordid Affections? He who hath *the Blessing of him that was ready to perish coming upon him, and who causeth the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy*; or he that *oppressed the Needy*, and hath *the Cries of the Poor, the Widow, and the Fatherless* against him? He that rejoiceth in his Neighbour's Welfare, or he that envieth his Prosperity? He that from a noble Disposition is ready *to forgive Injuries and to overcome Evil with Good*, or he that burneth with an eager Thirst of Revenge for every imagined Injury, and by keen Retaliations perpetuates Feuds and Animosities? Whether is it more *pleasant for Brethren to dwell together in Unity*, or to be distracted and torn in Pieces by Enmity and Discord? Will it bear a Debate which yields the noblest Satisfaction, that *Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and of good Fruits, without Partiality and without Hypocrisy*; or that *bitter Envying and Strife which produceth Confusion and every evil Work*? It may indeed seem to be a hard Lesson to be obliged to subdue the strong Passions of Wrath, Hatred, and Revenge: But it

is absolutely necessary for our own Happiness, that we should do so, whatever Pains or Difficulties it may cost us; since those Dispositions carry Torment in their Nature, and, where they prevail, tend to fill the Soul with Rage and Bitterness, and, when gratified, yield only an ill-natured and malignant Pleasure. To forbid us to entertain and indulge such malevolent Affections towards others is in Effect to forbid us to vex and torment ourselves.

And now, upon the Whole, it is manifest that the Observance of those of God's Commandments, which prescribe a benevolent Temper and Conduct towards Mankind, is really conducive to our own Happiness: They evidently bear upon them the Impressions of the Divine Goodness, and lead us to resemble the best of Beings in his most amiable Perfections. It is declared, that *God is Love, and he that dwelleth in Love dwelleth in God, and God in him.* 1 John iv. 16. The Soul that is possessed with a sincere and extensive Benevolence is in a particular Manner fitted for receiving his gracious Communications. The Holy Spirit of Love and Peace will delight to dwell in such a Heart, and to shed his sacred Consolations there. And

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it ſhould mightily heighten our Joys to conſider, that the all-ſufficient *Jehovah*, who is ſo infinitely exalted above our Services, yet hath been pleaſed for our Encouragement to ſignify to us, that what Good we do to our Fellow-Creatures, in Conformity to his Will, and in Obedience to his Commands, he will accept and reward as if done to himſelf. Finally, The Exerciſe of *Love* and *Charity* hath a manifeſt Tendency to prepare us for that State of perfect eternal Love and Peace in God's immediate Preſence and Kingdom above. The Soul that is filled with Love is formed into the Temper of Heaven, and may in Proportion be ſaid to have Heaven brought down in ſome happy Beginnings here on Earth: For *Charity never faileth.* 1 *Cor.* xiii. 8. It is and ſhall be the everlaſting Temper of the bleſſed Angels and glorified Saints. Their *eternal Life* ſhall be *eternal Love*. And as they ſhall be perpetually receiving the bliſsful Emanations of Divine Life and Light, of Love and Joy, from God the indeficient Fountain of all Good; ſo they ſhall be perpetually communicating their Joys to one another. There ſhall therefore be an endleſs Circulation of Joys; the Satiſ-

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faction and Happiness of every one of them shall be the Satisfaction and Happiness of all the rest; whilst *the God of Love* shall delight in them as the living Images of his own Goodness to all Eternity.

On

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XIII.

PSALM cxix. 47.

I will delight myself in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

THE Law of God, which we are under indispensable Obligations to obey, is of great and noble Extent. *The Commandment is*, as the Psalmist expresseth it, *exceeding broad*, and taketh in the whole Compass of our Duty. It hath been shewn that it extends both to the Duties we more immediately owe to God, and to those we owe to our Fellow-Creatures, as comprehending the Exercise of *Justice* and *Charity* in all their various Branches,

Branches. And it appears, from the View that has been taken of them, that the Performance of thoſe Duties has a Tendency to produce a true rational Satisfaction and Delight. There is another Part of our Duty more immediately relating to ourſelves, which is alſo required in the Divine Law, and the Practice of which, as well as the former, is eſſential to a truly religious and virtuous Character. This is what St. *Paul*, in the Paſſage before referred to, Tit. ii. 12, expreſſes by *our living ſoberly*; which is not merely to be underſtood of *Sobriety* in the common Acceptation of the Word, as oppoſed to *Rioting and Drunkenneſs*, though this alſo is neceſſarily included; but it takes in the Whole of Self-Government, or that regular Temper and Conduct in the Management of ourſelves, which becomes us, as reaſonable and moral Agents. And this is certainly of great Importance to the true Happineſs and Perfection of our Natures, and without which we cannot be well qualified for the right Performance of our Duty either towards God or Man.

And here the firſt Thing I would obſerve, as neceſſary to the right Government of ourſelves, is that we ſhould endeavour to get our Minds well furniſhed with uſeful Knowledge, and ſeaſoned with good religi-

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ous Principles and moral Sentiments, and that we ſhould exerciſe ourſelves in ſerious Conſideration and Reflection. God is repreſented as highly diſpleaſed with thoſe who continue in a contented Ignorance, and take no Care to make a right Uſe of their thinking Powers: *It is a People of no Underſtanding, therefore he that made them will not have Mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no Favour.* Iſ. xxvii. 11. Their *Want of Knowledge* is repreſented as the Cauſe of their *Deſtruction*; *My People are deſtroyed for Lack of Knowledge.* Hoſ. iv. 6. Accordingly we are frequently exhorted and required to apply ourſelves to the Attainment of true Wiſdom and Knowledge: *Wiſdom is the principal Thing, therefore get Wiſdom; and, with all thy Getting, get Underſtanding.* —*Take faſt hold of Inſtruction, let her not go; keep her, for ſhe is thy Life.* Prov. iv. 7. 13. *Be ye not unwiſe*, ſaith the Apoſtle, *but underſtanding what the Will of the Lord is.* Eph. v. 17. And *the new Man*, which we *Chriſtians* are required to *put on*, is ſaid to be *renewed in Knowledge after the Image of him that created him.* Col. iii. 10. That Knowledge which is of the greateſt Importance to us is the Knowledge of God, of his glorious Perfections and governing Providence, and of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, the

great *Mediator between God and Man*; the Knowledge of the Terms of our Acceptance with God, and of the Duties which are required of us in this State of Trial, and of a future State of Retribution. And there are few but, if they will make Uſe of Inſtruction provided for them, and give that Attention which the Importance of the Caſe deſerves, may attain to ſuch a Knowledge of theſe Things as will be of great Uſe for regulating their Temper and Practice. This is evident from Fact and Experience: Many Inſtances of this Kind are to be met with, even among thoſe of low Condition and Capacities. And for any wilfully to neglect the Improvement of their Minds with religious Knowledge, and to indulge themſelves in a wretched Ignorance of thoſe Things which it is moſt neceſſary for them to know, is a moſt inexcuſable Conduct, and unworthy reaſonable Beings. But it is not ſufficient for us to endeavour to get our Minds furniſhed with juſt Notions of theſe Things: We muſt alſo endeavour by ſerious Conſideration and Reflection to impreſs them deeply upon our Hearts, and to get them wrought into the Temper of our Minds, that they may become living Principles in us, and may have a proper Effect and Influence upon our whole Deportment.

ment. We muſt be particularly careful to preſerve upon our Spirits a ſtrong and lively Senſe of the moral Differences of Things, and to get our mental Taſte and Diſcernment more exerciſed and improved, that we may have an intimate and exquiſite Senſation of the Beauty and Excellency of true Holineſs, Goodneſs, and Virtue, and may have our Hearts brought to a fixed generous Abhorrence of what is baſe and falſe, unjuſt and impure. It highly concerneth us to get our Conſciences duly informed and enlightened, and frequently to examine the State of our own Minds, that we may obſerve and rectify what we find to be amiſs there. The Power of Self-Reflection is one of the nobleſt our Natures are furniſhed with: And the right Uſe and Exerciſe of this Power is abſolutely neceſſary to *the Keeping of the Heart with all Diligence*, and to the Exerciſing a proper Diſcipline over it, which is a moſt important Part of Self-Government. This is what Religion preſcribes; and in this, as well as other Reſpects, it is, when rightly underſtood, the greateſt Friend to the real Culture and Improvement of the rational and moral Powers. As far as we follow it's Dictates, we live a Life of Reaſon; we are made acquainted with Things of the greateſt

Worth and Importance; we propoſe to ourſelves the moſt excellent Ends, and purſue them by the propereſt Means; in which true Wiſdom doth eminently conſiſt. And for this the holy Scriptures afford the beſt Helps: *They are able*, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, to *make us wiſe unto Salvation*. 2 Tim. iii. 15. *The Entrance of thy Word*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *giveth Light; it giveth Underſtanding unto the Simple*. Pſ. cxix. 130. Nothing therefore can be more reaſonable than the Injunction which is laid upon us *to ſearch the Scriptures*, John v. 39. How thankful ſhould we be to God for the glorious Diſcoveries which are there made to us? And to ſuffer theſe Divine Oracles to lie neglected by us would argue the greateſt Ingratitude towards God, and the moſt unaccountable Inattention to the Means of our own Happineſs and ſpiritual Improvement. It highly concerneth us therefore to guard againſt that Diſſipation of Thought which is ſo unbecoming to intelligent Beings, and which rendereth us averſe to exerciſe our thinking Powers even upon Things of the higheſt Conſequence. And, though to apply ourſelves to ſerious Conſideration may at firſt appear difficult and diſagreeable, it ſhall be amply compenſated by the happy Advantages which ſhall attend it:

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When Wiſdom entereth into thine Heart, and Knowledge is pleaſant unto thy Soul, Diſcretion ſhall preſerve thee, Underſtanding ſhall keep thee. Prov. ii. 10, 11.

Secondly, Another Part of the Duty required of us, with regard to ourſelves, is that we ſhould labour to keep the Body in a due Subjection to the Mind, and to govern the fleſhly Appetites, and reſtrain them in their proper Bounds. Man conſiſteth of Body and Mind, of a ſenſitive and rational Part; and the Spirit or Mind is undoubtedly the nobleſt Part of our Nature, and was formed to be the governing Principle. When the ſenſitive fleſhly Appetites are kept in a regular Subordination to the higher Powers of Reaſon and Conſcience, then it is that the human Nature preſerveth it's proper Order, and it is fitted for attaining to that Perfection and Happineſs, for which it was originally deſigned. The Body indeed is not to be neglected; it's Health and Safety, and in many Caſes it's Pleaſure too, is to be conſulted. God hath implanted bodily Inſtincts and Appetites for wiſe Purpoſes, and hath ſo ordered it, that there are pleaſing Senſations annexed to the Gratification of them. Pleaſures flow in upon us at the Eye, the Ear, the Taſte, and all the bodily Senſes; which contribute not a little to the

Entertainment of human Life. And the Author of our Being certainly never intended to forbid and condemn all Gratification of thoſe Appetites which, by his own Appointment, were interwoven into the animal Conſtitution, and into the very Frame of our Natures, whilſt we are *in the Body*. But then the Danger lies here, that Men are apt to ſuffer themſelves to be ſo far carried away by thoſe animal bodily Pleaſures, as, for the Sake of them, to neglect and diſregard the nobler Exerciſes and Enjoyments of Reaſon and Virtue. Bewitched with ſenſual Gratifications, they let looſe the Reins to the fleſhly Appetite; and, when this, which is a blind Principle, not deſigned or fitted to govern, uſurpeth the Sovereignty, nothing but Confuſion muſt enſue. A wretched and unnatural State this! It often happens, that *the Fleſh* obtains ſuch Power as to ſway the Determinations of the Will contrary to the Dictates of Reaſon, or even ſo far inſlaves Reaſon itſelf, as to cauſe it to pronounce on the Side of Appetite, and to employ it's noble Powers only *to make Proviſion for the Fleſh, to fulfil the Luſts thereof*. When this is the Caſe, the Nature of Man is degraded from it's original Dignity; it is debaſed and brutified, and rendered incapable of enjoying it's proper Happineſs.

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Now therefore the great and noble Deſign of Religion and the Law of God is to recover the human Nature from this it's degenerate State, to reſtore Reaſon to the Throne, and aſſert it's Dominion over the inferior Appetites and Paſſions; not indeed to extinguiſh thoſe Appetites, but to guard againſt Exceſs, and keep them within juſt Bounds. It is no ſmall Part of Wiſdom and Self-Management to govern our Inclinations even towards lawful bodily Pleaſures, ſo as ſtill to maintain the Superiority of the Mind, and not ſuffer thoſe Pleaſures to captivate our Reaſon, or to indiſpoſe us for ſpiritual and Divine Enjoyments. Hence the *Chriſtian* Life is expreſſed by *walking not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit: There is no Condemnation*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *to them that are in* Chriſt Jeſus, *who walk not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit*. Rom. viii. 1. There is indeed, and always will be, whilſt we are *in the Body*, a Struggle, in a greater or leſs Degree, between *the Fleſh and the Spirit*. But the proper Office of Religion is to aſſiſt and render us victorious in that *Conflict*: And, when, through the gracious Aids of God's Holy Spirit, and by exerciſing a conſtant Care and Diſcipline over ourſelves, *the Fleſh* is ſo far ſubjected to *the Spirit*, that it's Oppoſition is in a great Meaſure ſubdued,

the inward Peace and Tranquillity, the Satisfaction and Self-Enjoyment which ariſes from it, is not to be expreſſed. To engage us to this is the Deſign of thoſe excellent Precepts and Repreſentations, *Walk after the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfil the Luſts of the Fleſh.* Gal. v. 16. *To be carnally minded is Death, but to be ſpiritually minded is Life and Peace.—We are Debtors, not to the Fleſh, to live after the Fleſh: For, if ye live after the Fleſh, ye ſhall die; but, if ye through the Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye ſhall live.* Rom. viii. 6, 12, 13. It is not indeed bound upon us, as our Duty, to exerciſe ourſelves in thoſe rigid Auſterities which tend to hurt and diſhonour the Body, to mar the Comfort of Life, and render it gloomy and diſagreeable. *Theſe Things* may have *a Shew of Wiſdom in Will-worſhip and Humility, and neglecting*, or as it is rendered in the Margin, *not ſparing the Body*; but they are not injoined in the Divine Law. *Col.* ii. 23. Yet it is our Duty *to keep the Body under*, as the Apoſtle tells us he did, 1 *Cor.* ix. 27. We muſt take Care that we do not, by too much Pampering and Indulging *the Fleſh*, add Force to it's Appetites, and increaſe the Difficulty of ſubduing them. We muſt do what we can to keep our Bodies pure and ſacred, and in a proper Diſpoſition

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to ſerve *the Mind*, conſidering that *we are not our own, but are bought with a Price*; and therefore are obliged *to glorify God in our Bodies and Spirits, which are his.* 1 Cor. vi. 20. This ſeems to be particularly intended in that excellent Exhortation, *Rom.* xii. 1. *I beſeech you, Brethren, by the Mercies of God, that ye preſent your Bodies a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable in his Sight, which is your reaſonable Service.*

There are two natural bodily Appetites which deſerve to be taken particular Notice of, on this Occaſion, as what we are eſpecially concerned, and obliged by the Divine Law, to keep within proper Bounds, *viz.* the Appetite of Meat and Drink, and the fleſhly Concupiſcence. The Virtue by which the former is governed is called *Temperance*; that which regulateth the latter is *Continence* or *Chaſtity*.

Firſt, With regard to the firſt of theſe it muſt be obſerved, that, as Food is neceſſary to the Suſtenance of the Body and Preſervation of the human Life here on Earth, the Author of our Beings hath wiſely implanted in us a ſtrong Appetite towards it, which, when gratified, excites a pleaſurable Senſation: And, if it were not for this, we might be apt too often to neglect the neceſſary Means of our Nouriſhment and Support. It

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is allowed us therefore *to eat and drink*, and to take Pleaſure in doing ſo within the Bounds of a juſt Moderation, and with a thankful Senſe of the Divine Goodneſs. The wiſe Man pronounceth, that *it is good and comely for a Man to eat and drink, and to enjoy the Good of all his Labour that he taketh under the Sun, all the Days of his Life which God giveth him.* And he adds, that *this is the Gift of God.* Eccleſ. v. 18, 19. See alſo Chap. ii. 24. iii. 12, 13. And in the New Teſtament it is declared, that *every Creature of God is good, and nothing to be refuſed, if it be received with Thankſgiving.* And a ſevere Cenſure is paſſed upon thoſe as *falſe Teachers and Deceivers*, who *commanded to abſtain from divers Kinds of Meats, which God hath created to be received with Thankſgiving, of them which believe and know the Truth.* 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3, 4. Thus we ſee how admirably *Chriſtianity*, in this as well as other Inſtances, keeps clear of all Extremes; and ſuitable to this was the Example of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, the moſt perfect Pattern of all moral Excellence: He came *eating and drinking*, *i. e.* he allowed himſelf in the moderate Uſe of Meats and Drinks; and, though he never tranſgreſſed the Rules of Temperance, the *Phariſees* took Occaſion to reproach him, becauſe he did not himſelf practiſe,

practiſe, nor bind upon his Diſciples the Obſervance of thoſe frequent rigorous Faſtings upon which they valued themſelves. That the Goſpel is far from countenancing ſuch a ſevere Abſtinence as tends to hurt the Body appears from that Injunction of St. *Paul* to *Timothy*, *Drink no longer Water, but uſe a little Wine for thy Stomach's Sake, and thine often Infirmities.* 1 Tim. v. 23.

But then, on the other Hand, Intemperance, and an exceſſive Indulgence of the Appetite of Meat and Drink, is moſt expreſsly forbidden in the Holy Scriptures; *When thou ſitteſt to eat with a Ruler, conſider diligently what is before thee; and put a Knife to thy Throat, if thou be a Man given to Appetite. Be not deſirous of his Dainties; for they are deceitful Meat.* Prov. xxiii, 1, 2, 3. And again, Verſes 20, 21. *Be not amongſt Wine-bibbers, amongſt riotous Eaters of Fleſh: For the Drunkard and the Glutton come to Poverty, and Drowſineſs ſhall clothe a Man with Rags.* And the ſad Effects of Drunkenneſs are there moſt elegantly and pathetically deſcribed, Verſe 29—35. The beſt and wiſeſt Men in all Ages have concurred in repreſenting Intemperance in Eating and Drinking as a moſt ſhameful and unmanly Vice, which tends not only to diſhonour the Body, but to debaſe the Soul, and to abuſe

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and ſtupify the rational Powers; and opens a Way to the moſt ſcandalous Enormities. But, beſides this, we are particularly warned againſt it in the Goſpel-Law, as altogether unbecoming our Character and Privileges as *Chriſtians*: *The Night is far ſpent, the Day is at Hand: Let us therefore caſt off the Works of Darkneſs, and let us put on the Armour of Light.* Let us walk honeſtly, or *decently* and *orderly*, εὐσχημόνως, *as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenneſs.* Rom. xiii. 12, 13. St. *Paul* oppoſes the *being drunk with Wine to the being filled with the Spirit.* Eph. v. 18. And our Saviour repreſents the Indulging to Riot and Intemperance as inconſiſtent with making a due Preparation for the future Judgment: *Take Heed to yourſelves*, ſaith he, *leſt at any Time your Hearts be overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and Cares of this Life, and ſo that Day come upon you unawares.* Luke xxi. 34. And, finally, *Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch-like*, are reckoned among *the Works of the Fleſh*, concerning which it is declared, that *they which do ſuch Things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.* Gal. v. 21. Theſe Repreſentations are very wiſely deſigned to prevent our giving Way to intemperate Excuſes, or, if we have been ſo unhappy as to ſuffer ourſelves to be intangled

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in Habits of this Kind, ſhould hinder our perſiſting in them, and ſhould put us upon vigorous Endeavours to ſhake them off. This indeed may be a Work of great Difficulty, but it is far from being impoſſible: And by forſaking the baſe Pleaſures of Intemperance we ſhall be prepared for Satisfactions of a nobler Kind. Temperance tends both to keep the Mind and Powers of Reaſon ſound and clear, and the bodily Senſes clean and vigorous. It may therefore be juſtly ſaid, that the temperate Man hath a far juſter Reliſh even of ſenſible Enjoyments than the diſſolute Debauchee, beſides the Satisfaction which ariſeth from the Reflections of his own Mind on his having acted in a Manner agreeable to the Will and Law of God, and becoming his rational Nature: And even Faſting and Abſtinence on proper Occaſions, when it is made Uſe of as an Help to Devotion, and not carried to a ſuperſtitious Exceſs, yieldeth more of a ſincere Satisfaction than all the riotous Joys of the voluptuous Senſualiſt.

Secondly, Another Part of our Duty, with regard to the Regulation of our bodily Appetites, is *Continence* or *Chaſtity*, which conſiſteth in the due Government of that natural Propenſion which is deſigned for the Continuance of the Species. This is implanted

implanted by the Author of our Beings, and hath a Pleaſure annexed to it for wiſe Purpoſes; and, when properly conducted and regulated, it may anſwer valuable Ends. In the inferior brute Creatures this animal Inſtinct or Appetite cannot be properly brought under Laws; but among Men, who are rational Agents, it is neceſſary that it ſhould be ſo. It muſt be governed in ſuch a Manner as to ſhun Diſorder and Licentiouſneſs, and to lay a proper Foundation for Forming Families, and the Relations reſulting from thence, and for the orderly Education of Children. For this Purpoſe Marriage was inſtituted by Divine Appointment, which is well fitted to be a Source of human Happineſs, and was originally intended both to gratify and regulate this Inclination, to direct it in it's proper Channel, and keep it within juſt Bounds. Indeed Superſtition and falſe Devotion hath carried this much farther. Under Pretence of an extraordinary Degree of Purity, it hath put Men upon binding themſelves by ſolemn Vows to ſuppreſs this natural Inclination, and not allow the regular Gratification of it in Marriage, as if this was a Kind of Impurity and Uncleanneſs: But the Language of the holy Scriptures is very different. *To avoid Fornication*, ſaith St. *Paul*,

Paul, let every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman her own Husband. 1 Cor. vii. 2. Thoſe are condemned as *giving Heed to ſeducing Spirits, and ſpeaking Lyes in Hypocriſy, who forbid to marry.* 1 Tim. iv. 3. And it is declared that *Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled.* Heb. xiii. 4. But, though the Law of God allows the orderly Gratification of this Appetite, yet it ſtrongly forbids and condemns all irregular Indulgences of it. Not only is Adultery prohibited, which is a Breach of the Marriage-Covenant, and hath been generally condemned by the Laws of civiliſed Nations, but Fornication too. We are told, that, *Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge.* Heb. xiii. 4. *Fornication*, as well as *Adultery*, is reckoned among thoſe *Works of the Fleſh*, which, if impenitently perſiſted in, will exclude Perſons from the *Kingdom of God.* Gal. v. 21. *This is the Will of God* ſaith St. *Paul, even your Sanctification, that ye ſhould abſtain from Fornication: that every one of you ſhould know how to poſſeſs his Veſſel in Sanctification and Honour; not in the Luſt of Concupiſcence, even as the* Gentiles *which know not God: For God hath not called us unto Uncleanneſs, but unto Holineſs.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6. Our bleſſed Saviour, the great Interpreter of the Di-

Divine Law, hath extended it ſo far as to forbid the Indulging impure Inclinations in the Heart: *Ye have heard*, ſaith he, *That it was ſaid by them of old Time, Thou ſhalt not commit Adultery: But I ſay unto you, That whoſoever looketh on a Woman to luſt after her, hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* Matt. v. 27, 28. And the wiſe Man, ſpeaking of *the ſtrange Woman*, ſaith, *Luſt not after her Beauty in thine Heart.* Prov. vi. 25. And indeed the Watching over and Suppreſſing laſcivious Inclinations, before they gather too great Strength, is the moſt effectual Way to prevent their Breaking forth into outward Acts of Uncleanneſs. We ſhould avoid every Thing in our Converſation and Deportment, which bordereth on Impurity: *Fornication and all Uncleanneſs—let it not be once named among you, as becometh Saints; neither Filthineſs, nor fooliſh Talking, nor Jeſting, which are not convenient.* Eph. v. 3, 4. The more effectually to engage us to Chaſtity and Purity of Behaviour, *Chriſtianity* teacheth us to regard even our *Bodies* as the *Members of* Chriſt, and the *Temples of the Holy Ghoſt: Know ye not, that your Bodies are the Members of Chriſt? Shall I then take the Members of Chriſt and make them the Members of an Harlot? God forbid.*

—*Flee*

—*Flee Fornication: Every Sin, i. e.* every other Sin that a Man doeth, *is without the Body; but he that committeth Fornication ſinneth againſt his own Body. What, know ye not that your Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a Price.* 1 Cor. vi. 15, 18, 19. This Part of the Divine Law is what many are ready to exclaim againſt, as unreaſonably harſh and ſevere: But ſuch Complaints and Objections proceed not from cool impartial Reaſon, but from licentious Appetite. The Law of God hath provided for the Gratification of our natural Inclinations within juſt Bounds, and, if it gave an unreſtrained Indulgence to them, it might juſtly be found Fault with, as it would open a wide Door to all Manner of Diſorders. The Miſchiefs which ſuch unclean Luſts bring upon thoſe that indulge them are repreſented in a very ſtriking Manner by *Solomon* in the Book of *Proverbs*: Speaking of the *ſtrange Woman*, ſo he calls the Harlot and the Adultereſs, he ſaith, *Her End is bitter as Wormwood, ſharp as a two-edged Sword. Her Feet go down to Death; her Steps take Hold of Hell. Remove thy Way from her, come not nigh the Door of her Houſe: Leſt thou give thine Honour unto others, and thy Years unto the*

Cruel: Leſt Strangers be filled with thy Wealth, and thy Labours be in the Houſe of a Stranger, and thou mourn at laſt, when thy Fleſh and thy Body are conſumed. Prov. v. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10. See alſo Chap. vi. 6—35. vii. 22—27. St. *Peter* likens thoſe who *walk after the Fleſh in the Luſts of Uncleanneſs* to *natural brute Beaſts made to be taken and deſtroyed.* 2 Pet. ii. 10, 12. And St. *Paul* obſerves concerning the diſſolute *Gentiles*, that, *being paſt Feeling, they had given themſelves over unto Laſciviouſneſs.* Eph. iv. 18. In Proportion as theſe Luſts prevail, they tend to extinguiſh the moral Feelings: They defile the Soul, and caſt it down from it's Excellency: They render it incapable of reliſhing the pure and ſublime Delights of Religion and Virtue, and conſequently diſqualify it for thoſe Enjoyments in which the Happineſs of the rational Nature doth principally conſiſt. When Perſons are once brought under the Dominion of impure Luſts, they gradually loſe that Senſe of Shame and Modeſty which is implanted in our Natures as a Preſervative to our Innocence and Virtue; they are ready to break over all the Bounds of Honour and Conſcience, and ſtick at no Means by which they can gratify the headſtrong Appetite. And not only do theſe Luſts, when indulged,

produce

produce great Miſchiefs to particular Perſons and Families, but to large Communities. The Experience and Obſervation of all Ages ſhew that, when ſuch Vices become general among a People, they open a Way to all Manner of Diſſoluteneſs and Corruption, and deſtroy all national Virtue and Probity, and true public Spirit. It is therefore an Inſtance of great Goodneſs, as well as Wiſdom, in the ſupreme Lawgiver to lay Reſtraints by his Laws upon thoſe diſorderly Luſts which *war againſt the Soul*, as St. *Peter* ſpeaks, 1 Pet. ii. 11. And though the Reſtraining and Governing them may be very difficult and coſt no ſmall Pains and Uneaſineſs; yet, through the Power of the Conſiderations and Motives which the Goſpel ſetteth before us, and the Aſſiſtance of Divine Grace, which will never be wanting to our ſincere and earneſt Endeavours, it is far from being impracticable; and the noble and Divine Satisfaction, which will ariſe from having ſubdued thoſe irregular and vicious Inclinations, will vaſtly outweigh all the Pleaſures which could be propoſed in gratifying them.

Thus I have conſidered that Part of our Duty towards ourſelves, which relateth to the Keeping the Body in a due Subjection to the Mind, and to the Governing the

fleſhly Appetites, and Reſtraining them within proper Bounds: And I have the more largely inſiſted upon this, becauſe many of the principal Prejudices againſt Religion and the Law of God are owing to it's Obliging us to regulate thoſe Appetites, and keep them under a proper Diſcipline: And yet, in the Judgment of right Reaſon, this ought greatly to recommend it to our Eſteem. The moſt of Mankind are wholly taken up in Pampering, Indulging, Adorning the Body, and Gratifying it's Appetites, as if they looked upon this to be the very End of their Living, and that their Body is their All, or at leaſt the chief Part of their Nature: But it is the Glory and Advantage of Religion, that, by making us ſenſible of the great Worth and Excellency of our Souls, it teacheth us to maintain the juſt Order and Dignity of our Nature, and delivereth the Mind from it's baſe Subjection and Servitude to the *Luſts of the Fleſh*, and thus layeth a Foundation for it's Enjoying a noble Liberty and ſolid Tranquillity, without which it is incapable of true Happineſs.

On Delighting in the Laws of God.

DISCOURSE XIV.

PSALM cxix. 47.

I will delight myſelf in thy Commandments, which I have loved.

THAT Part of the Divine Law which we are now conſidering relates to the Duties incumbent upon us with Regard to the right Management of ourſelves, as diſtinguiſhed from the Duties we more immediately owe to God, and to our Neighbour. This is what the Apoſtle expreſſeth by our *Living ſoberly in the World*: For Explaining which it was obſerved, that it includeth, in the firſt Place, our Endeavouring to improve our Minds, and to get

them furniſhed with uſeful Knowledge, and well ſeaſoned with good religious Principles and moral Sentiments. It alſo includeth our Labouring to *keep the Body in a due Subjection to the Soul*, and to govern the fleſhly Appetites, and reſtrain them within proper Bounds: And it was ſhewn that there is nothing in this but what is highly reaſonable and conducive to our own Satisfaction and Happineſs.

I now proceed to obſerve farther, Thirdly, That another important Part of the Duty which is injoined in the Divine Law, with regard to the right Ordering ourſelves, is, that we ſhould maintain an univerſal Moderation in our Affections and Deſires towards what are accounted the good Things of this preſent World. St. *John* diſtributes *the Things that are in the World* under three Heads, *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, and the Pride of Life.* 1 John ii. 16. *The Luſt of the Fleſh* relates to thoſe ſenſual Pleaſures which ariſe from the Gratification of the fleſhly Appetite; and theſe were conſidered in our laſt Diſcourſe. By *the Luſt of the Eye* we are probably to underſtand inordinate Deſires after worldly Riches, and thoſe outward Advantages that attend them, which generally attract the Eyes of Men, and contribute to our living with Elegance

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and Affluence. By *the Pride of Life* is ſignified Power and Dominion, and the Pomp of worldly Honours and Dignities. Daily Obſervation and Experience may convince us, that we are in great Danger of exceeding in our Deſires and Affections towards theſe Things. Our Fancies dreſs them up in a gaudy and agreeable Garb, ſo that we are apt to look upon them as the principal Ingredients in human Happineſs. Hence it is that Men are ſo prone to envy each other on the Account of them, and ſtick at no Methods for obtaining them, though often at the Expence of Juſtice, Truth, Friendſhip, and generous Honeſty: And even they who do not make Uſe of unjuſt Means to obtain them yet are apt to purſue them with too great Ardour, and to place too much of their Happineſs in them, to the Neglect of Things of the greateſt Worth and everlaſting Importance. The wiſeſt Men in all Ages have been ſenſible that an exceſſive Valuation of theſe outward worldly Advantages, and an inordinate Affection towards them, is the Source of numberleſs Miſchiefs and Diſorders in human Life; and have therefore looked upon it as one of the worthieſt Offices of Philoſophy to provide Remedies and Antidotes againſt it: But all their Endeavours this Way have fallen greatly ſhort

of the Helps which Religion and the Word of God furniſh to this Purpoſe. And there are two Ways which are principally made Uſe of in Scripture for moderating our Deſires and Affections towards worldly Things: One is by repreſenting to us the vain and tranſitory Nature of all worldly Enjoyments, and their utter Inſufficiency to make us happy: The other is by raiſing our Affections and Views to Things of an incomparably nobler Nature, the great Things of an eternal World.

Many are the Repreſentations made to us in Scripture of the vain and unſatisfying Nature, the uncertain and tranſitory Duration of all Things here below. To this Purpoſe it is obſerved that *the Time is ſhort, and that the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away.* 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. *Wilt thou ſet thine Eye,* ſaith the wiſe Man, *upon that which is not? For certainly Riches make to themſelves Wings and fly away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* Prov. xxiii. 5. They are therefore called *uncertain Riches,* 1 Tim. vi. 17. For this Reaſon, among others, our bleſſed Saviour hath taken particular Care to warn us againſt an exceſſive Love of worldly Riches, or putting our Truſt in them: *Lay not up for yourſelves,* ſaith he, *Treaſures upon Earth, where Moth and Ruſt doth corrupt, and where Thieves break through and ſteal, i. e.* do not

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fix your Hearts upon them as your proper Portion and Happineſs. *Matt.* vi. 19. And again, *Take Heed and beware of Covetouſneſs; for a Man's Life, i. e.* the Happineſs of Life, *conſiſteth not in the Abundance which he poſſeſſeth.* And he illuſtrates this by a beautiful *Parable* concerning the proſperous Worldling, *who ſaid in his Heart, Soul, thou haſt much good Things laid up for many Years; take thine Eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry.* But how ſoon was his boaſted Happineſs at an End! *God ſaid unto him, Thou Fool, this Night thy Soul ſhalt be required of thee: Then whoſe ſhall thoſe Things be, which thou haſt provided?* Luke xii. 15, *&c.* Nor are worldly Honours more ſtable than Riches: *—Man, being in Honour, abideth not:—When he dieth, he ſhall carry nothing away, his Glory ſhall not deſcend after him.* Pſ. xlix. 12, 17. *All Fleſh is Graſs, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of Graſs; the Graſs withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away.* 1 Pet. i. 24.

But it would be to little Purpoſe to repreſent to us the Uncertainty and unſatisfying Nature of worldly Objects and Enjoyments, if we had no better or higher Things to expect. We are taught therefore in the Word of God to raiſe our Thoughts and Affections to Things of a more durable and excellent Nature, to aſpire after a ſublime

lime and permanent Felicity provided for us in the higheſt Heavens. To this Purpoſe are thoſe Evangelical Precepts, *Lay up for yourſelves Treaſures in Heaven; ſeek ye firſt the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs.* Matt. vi. 20, 33. *If ye be riſen with* Chriſt, *ſeek thoſe Things which are above, where Chriſt now ſitteth on the right Hand of God. Set your Affections on Things above, not on Things on the Earth.* Col. iii. 1, 2. And it is given as the Character of real *Chriſtians*, that *their Converſation is in Heaven.* Phil. iii. 20. And that *they look not at the Things which are ſeen, but at the Things which are not ſeen; for the Things which are ſeen are temporal, but the Things which are not ſeen are eternal.* 2 Cor. iv. 18. The Intention is not as if we we were abſolutely forbidden to deſire or endeavour to obtain theſe worldly Goods at all, or to take any Pleaſure in them, when by a prudent and honeſt Induſtry we have obtained them; but that we muſt not make them the principal Objects of our Affections and Purſuits. It is Religion, rightly underſtood, which inſtructeth to form a juſt Eſtimate of worldly Enjoyments, and to regard them as at beſt no more than temporary Conveniences and Accommodations in our Journey through this World to a better, where alone we can attain to the true Happineſs

pineſs and Perfection of our Natures. And the good Man who regardeth them in this View will both maintain a due Moderation in his Affections and Deſires towards theſe preſent Things, and will have a more genuine Reliſh of them, and uſe them to better Purpoſes, than other Men. If he has a large Affluence of worldly Riches, by Enjoying them with Temperance and Thankfulneſs as the Gifts of the Divine Bounty, he extracts all the Good out of them which they are capable of yielding, and at the ſame Time endeavours to *do Good* with his *Abundance*; and thus he has the noble Pleaſure of Employing his Wealth and Power for the Divine Glory, and for Promoting the Happineſs of his Fellow-creatures: Or, if he hath a ſcanty *Portion of this World's Goods*, the Pſalmiſt's Obſervation holds certainly, that *a little that a righteous Man hath is better than the Riches of many Wicked.* *Pſ.* xxxvii. 16. For he hath the true Enjoyment of that *Little*, and *the Bleſſing of God* with it. Religion teacheth him to be content with his Share, as what Divine Providence ſeeth to be fitteſt for him, and not to envy thoſe that have more: For his Views are principally fixed upon Things of an higher Nature which ſhall never be taken away

away from him, and in which he is ſure never to meet with a Diſappointment.

Fourthly, The right Ordering and Management of ourſelves, to which we are obliged by the Divine Law, includes not only our Maintaining a due Moderation in our Affections and Deſires towards *the good Things* of this preſent World, but our Endeavouring to get our Minds properly fortified againſt the outward Evils to which we are now expoſed. Theſe are of various Kinds, Pains, and Diſeaſes of Body, Croſſes in our Affairs, the Loſs of valuable earthly Comforts, Poverty, Contempt, the Injuries that are done in our Perſons, Properties or Reputations; in a Word, all Manner of Afflictions and Sufferings, and Death itſelf. Theſe Things may be properly called *Evils*, as they are troubleſome to our Natures, and cauſe very uneaſy Senſations. There are ſeveral of our Paſſions and Affections which are converſant about theſe Evils: And it is one excellent Deſign of Religion to moderate thoſe Paſſions, and ſo to eſtabliſh our Minds, that theſe worldly Evils may not make too deep and powerful Impreſſions upon us.

The Apprehenſion of approaching Evils naturally creates Fear; and, when this is kept within the Bounds of a prudent Caution,

tion, ſo as to put us upon proper Meaſures for averting the Evils which threaten us, it is both allowable and uſeful. Our Lord directeth his Diſciples *to be wiſe as Serpents*, as well as *harmleſs as Doves*; and, *when perſecuted in one City, to flee unto another.* Matt. x. 16, 23. But it highly concerneth us to guard againſt an exceſſive overwhelming Fear, which caſteth the Soul into a mean Dejection, and tendeth to put us upon baſe and unworthy Means for avoiding the Evils we are afraid of. It is the great Advantage of Religion, that, though it doth not encourage us to expoſe ourſelves raſhly and needleſſly to Evils and Dangers, yet it prepareth us to meet them with a Divine Fortitude. The noble Language of the ſacred Writings is this: *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right Hand of my Righteouſneſs.* Iſ. xli. 10. *Hearken unto me, ye that hear Righteouſneſs, the People in whoſe Hearts is my Law. Fear ye not the Reproach of Men, neither be afraid of their Revilings: For the Moth ſhall eat them up like a Garment*, &c. Iſ. li. 7. *Be not afraid of them that kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do.* Luke xii. 4. *If ye ſuffer for Righteouſneſs, happy are ye; be not afraid*

afraid of their Terror, neither be troubled. 1 Pet. iii. 14. It is declared concerning *the Man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his Commandments,* that *he ſhall not be afraid of evil Tidings; his Heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord.* Pſ. cxii. 1, 7. He regards all the Power and Rage of wicked Men and Devils as under the ſovereign Controul of the moſt powerful, benign, and righteous Lord and Governor of the World, and is perſuaded they can do no more than he ſees fit for wiſe Ends to permit.

And, as Religion furniſheth the beſt Remedy againſt an exceſſive Fear of Men or worldly Evils, ſo alſo it requireth and aſſiſteth us to moderate our angry Paſſions which are uſually excited by the Apprehenſions of Evils or Injuries done or attempted againſt us. To this Purpoſe are thoſe Precepts, *Ceaſe from Anger, and forſake Wrath; fret not thyſelf in anywiſe to do Evil.* Pſ. xxxvii. 8. *Be not haſty in thy Spirit to be angry; for Anger reſteth in the Boſom of Fools.* Eccleſ. vii. 9. *Be ye angry,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *and ſin not. i. e.* ſo govern your Anger, as not to ſin; *let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath.* Eph. iv. 26. To ſignify that we muſt take Care, that our Anger do not tranſport us into Exceſs, or ſettle in deliberate Malice and Revenge. This is an eminent Inſtance

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of Self-government, and argues a true Nobleneſs of Mind: For, as the wiſe Man obſerves, *He that is ſlow to Anger is better than the Mighty; and he that ruleth his Spirit than he that taketh a City.* Prov. xvi. 32.

Another Paſſion which is apt greatly to affect us, when we are deprived of worldly good Things, or are under the Preſſure of worldly Evils, is Grief and Sorrow. And here alſo Religion comes to our Aid. It doth not abſolutely condemn all the Emotions of Sorrow, but forbiddeth the Carrying it to an Exceſs, and directeth us to guard againſt that *Sorrow of the World which worketh Death.* What it requireth of us is this, that we *ſorrow not as thoſe that have no Hope.* 1 Theſſ. iv. 13. And that *we weep as though we wept not.* 1 Cor. vii. 30. We muſt learn to bear the Evils which come upon us with Patience, which is an excellent Virtue, of great Uſe, and very neceſſary in this preſent State: *In Patience,* ſaith our Saviour, *poſſeſs ye your Souls.* Luke xxi. 19. *Let Patience have her perfect Work, that ye may be perfect and intire, wanting nothing.* Jam. i. 4. That we may be the better inabled to govern our Affections and Paſſions with regard to worldly Evils, we are inſtructed in the holy Scriptures to form juſt Apprehenſions concerning them; for our Paſſions are generally very

very much heightened and exaſperated by magnifying thoſe Evils in our Imagination beyond the Reality, We are taught therefore to regard them as comparatively ſhort and tranſitory in their Duration: That *they can only hurt the Body*, but cannot prejudice us in our nobler Intereſts: That they are all under the Direction of Divine Providence, and are ordered and appointed by infinite Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and Goodneſs for valuable and excellent Purpoſes: And, finally, that they are Part of the Diſcipline which our heavenly Father ſeeth to be neceſſary for his *Children* here on Earth, for Correcting their Miſcarriages; for Weaning their Affections from this preſent World; for Exerciſing and Strengthening their Faith, Patience, Reſignation, and other Virtues; and for Forming them into a *Meetneſs for Heaven*. And to him that conſidereth them in this View they bear a quite different Aſpect from what they do to the Reſt of Mankind: *I reckon*, ſaith St. *Paul*, that *the Sufferings of this preſent Time are not worthy to be compared unto the Glory that ſhall be revealed in us*. Rom viii. 18. And again, *Our light Affliction which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. The good Man, and he alone, can upon ſolid Grounds

Grounds *glory*, or *rejoice*, *in Tribulation, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope; and Hope maketh not ashamed, because the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.* Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. And certainly no outward Evils or Accidents can render him unhappy, who hath divine Comforts flowing in upon his Soul from the supreme Fountain of Good.

Thus it appears, that Religion and the Law of God, by directing and assisting us to vanquish our Fears, to govern our angry Passions, to moderate our Sorrows, and to maintain a steady Fortitude and Constancy of Soul under all worldly Evils, doth really consult and promote our own Ease and Happiness, and disarmeth those Evils of that which is really most hurtful in them; for, when we are inabled to to bear them properly, they can do us but little Harm; whereas, when we suffer them immoderately to affect us, the Tranquillity of our Minds is liable to be broken by every cross Accident which befalleth us. We either sink into an excessive Dejection of Mind, or we give Way to fretting Impatience and querulous Discontent; or we fly out into furious

Tranſports of raſh Anger, or our Spirits are invenomed and imbittered with Malice, Hatred, and Revenge; all which are greatly diſquieting and vexatious. It ought therefore to recommend Religion to our Eſteem and Choice, that it tends to remove theſe Impediments to our Happineſs, and to render us ſuperior to all the Evils of this preſent Life and World.

Several other Things might be mentioned, as included in that Part of the Duty required of us, which relateth to the right Management and Government of ourſelves: We muſt particularly guard againſt that inordinate Selfiſhneſs, which, where it prevaileth, hath a Tendency to harden and contract the Heart, and to extinguiſh every noble and generous Sentiment; and muſt be ready, when a proper Occaſion calls for it, to ſacrifice our fleſhly Eaſe and Pleaſure, and our worldly Intereſts, for promoting the Honour of God and the Good of Mankind. This in one Word is expreſſed by *Self-denial*, which, far from being an Enemy to our true Happineſs, doth really and moſt effectually ſecure and promote it, by engaging us to renounce whatſoever Intereſts and Gratifications are really inconſiſtent with it. This argues an excellent Temper of Mind,

pleaſing

pleaſing in the Sight of God, and which lays a proper Foundation for an inward Satisfaction and Complacency.

Humility is another Inſtance of Self-regulation, much inſiſted upon in the holy Scriptures. This is deſigned to moderate and regulate that that Self-valuation and Love of Eſteem, which, when carried to an Exceſs, is Pride and Vain-glory, whereby we aſſume to ourſelves more Honour and Eſteem than really belongs to us, over-valuing ourſelves and deſpiſing others. It is required of us, that *we put on Humbleneſs of Mind.* Col. iii. 12. or, as it is elſewhere expreſſed, that *we be clothed with Humility*; that *we do not think highly of ourſelves above what we ought to think, but that we ſhould think ſoberly* or *modeſtly*. Rom. xii. 3. Pride is diſpleaſing to God and Man; it produces Contention, and ſubjects thoſe in whom it prevails to many Vexations and Diſquietudes: Whereas Humility crowns and adorns our other Virtues, and ſpreads a kindly Influence through our whole Deportment. It cauſeth us to yield a due Submiſſion and Reſpect to thoſe who are our Superiors; renders us affable and condeſcending to Inferiors; gentle and obliging, peaceful and inoffenſive towards all; ready to bear

with the Weakneſſes and Defects of others from a Conſciouſneſs of our own. Such a Temper and Conduct manifeſtly contributes to our own Eaſe and Tranquillity, and tends to conciliate to us the Good-will and Eſteem of thoſe with whom we have to do: But, what is chiefly to be conſidered, it recommends us to the Favour and Approbation of God himſelf, who *reſiſteth the Proud, and giveth Grace unto the Humble*. 1 Pet. v. 5.

Finally, We muſt endeavour to preſerve a true Uprightneſs, a Candour and Simplicity of Spirit, in Oppoſition to all Deceit and Guile, and to what the Scripture expreſſeth by a *double Heart*, and *a double Tongue*. Sincerity of Heart hath deſervedly a great Streſs laid upon it in the Divine Law: It derives a Value to all other Endowments, and without it the moſt ſplendid Gifts and Endowments are repreſented as of no Avail to our Acceptance with God. It is that which renders our Conduct and Deportment conſiſtent and uniform; and a Conſciouſneſs of it hath a manifeſt Tendency to produce an inward Peace and Self-enjoyment, and an ingenuous Confidence towards God and Man: Whereas the Hypocrite is put to many troubleſome Shifts and Diſguiſes to conceal

ceal his real Character from the View of the World, and finds it hard with all his Art to eſcape the Reproaches of his own Mind. Happy they, who can upon good Grounds ſay, with the Apoſtle *Paul*, *Our Rejoicing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Converſation in the World!* 2 Cor. i. 12.

And now, from the Account that has been given of thoſe of the Divine Commandments, which relate more immediately to the right Management of ourſelves, and the Government of our own Appetites and Paſſions, it is manifeſt that they are deſigned to promote our real Happineſs. There are many indeed who imagine, that Happineſs is only to be found in an unreſtrained Indulgence to their fleſhly Appetites and Paſſions: But the Contrary is evident from Reaſon and Experience. The *Men of Pleaſure*, as they are called, are apt to value themſelves as if they only knew how to enjoy Life, and deſpiſe thoſe, as dull and heavy Souls, who do not give into the ſame Irregularities and Exceſſes. But let Reaſon judge, which hath the trueſt Pleaſure: He whoſe Life is almoſt one continued Round

of Revelling and Riot, who ſeldom leaves the Table and Company till Nature be clogged and overcharged, and who by ſuch a Courſe both vitiates his Appetites, and lays up Fuel for tormenting Pains and Diſeaſes: Or the Man that ſits chearful at his temperate Meals, taking in Moderation what ſufficeth to refreſh Nature, and not oppreſs it; and who with a peaceful Mind can offer up his Thanks to Heaven for his innocent Repaſt, without any of thoſe Crudities and Surfeits which are the nauſeous Fruits of a Debauch? Can the brutiſh Pleaſures of the Incontinent, and which, when the guilty Tranſport is over, are ſucceeded by Confuſion and Remorſe, be compared to the refined Satisfaction of a pure and chaſte Soul, or to the innocent Delights and Charms of virtuous Love? What an inward Peace and Serenity doth that Man enjoy who *poſſeſſeth his Soul in Meekneſs and Patience*, and who maintaineth a due Moderation in his Affections and Deſires towards the Things of this preſent World, in Compariſon of him who is hurried on in the reſtleſs Purſuits of Ambition or Avarice, or whoſe Heart is ſwollen with Pride, or inflamed with the angry Paſſions, or fretted with Envy and Diſcontent! It is a juſt Obſervation, that ſenſual

ſual Luſts and Appetites, the more they are gratified, the more uneaſy and importunate they grow: The exceſſive Indulging them doth but make them more troubleſome and head-ſtrong. The Man therefore, who reſtrains them within due Bounds, according to the Preſcriptions of the Divine Law, ſecures his own inward Peace and Repoſe, and enjoys the Sweets of a true and noble Liberty: Whereas he that indulges them only nouriſheth Luſts to be his own Tormentors; he harboureth domeſtic Tyrants, which will not ſuffer him to enjoy a real and ſolid Tranquillity: They carry on a continual Conflict within, and are often as contrary to one another, as they are all to Reaſon, hurrying him on to do what his Conſcience diſapproves, and thereby ſubjecting him to the Self-condemning Reflections of his own Mind; which is as miſerable a Condition as a reaſonable Creature can be in. Upon the Whole, may we not juſtly pronounce thoſe the happieſt of the human Race, whatſoever their outward Circumſtances may be, who, being freed from the Dominion of irregular Luſts and Paſſions, enjoy the peaceful Satisfaction which ariſeth from Moderation and Temperance, from Purity, Humility, Meekneſs, and conſcious

Sincerity, and from a ſolid Fortitude and true Greatneſs of Soul, which are the Diſpoſitions which Religion preſcribeth, and which it hath a manifeſt Tendency to ſtrengthen and improve?

We have now taken a diſtinct View of the Precepts of the Divine Law, as relating to the Duties required of us towards God, our Neighbours, and ourſelves; in the Practice of which a truly religious and virtuous Life doth properly conſiſt. And it appears, that in all theſe Reſpects the Law of God is conformable to right Reaſon and to the Nature of Things, and that all it's Injunctions are really conducive to the true Perfection and Felicity of our Nature. Carnal Appetite may remonſtrate againſt it, but it is what Reaſon and Conſcience, where it is not depraved by evil Habits and vicious Prejudices, upon the moſt impartial Conſideration, cannot but approve. And ſurely what Reaſon approves muſt, to a reaſonable Being, be a Source of the trueſt Satisfaction and Delight.

If the Contrary to thoſe Duties which God requireth were bound upon us by a Law; or if there were no Law at all, but every Man was left to gratify his own Luſts and Paſſions without Controul; how wretched

wretched would the State of Mankind be! There would be no Order, and conſequently no Safety, nothing but endleſs Confuſion and Miſery. Inſtead therefore of Complaining againſt God for the Preſcriptions of his Law, we ought to adore his Goodneſs in Giving us ſuch a Law. He is not a ſevere and rigid Taſk-maſter, who delighteth in Impoſing hard and unreaſonable Burdens upon his Creatures; nor doth he in his Dealings with us act in a Way of mere abſolute Authority, but according to the ſteady Rules of the moſt perfect Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, and Equity. As his infinite Goodneſs inclines him to delight in the Peace, the Order, and the Happineſs of his reaſonable Creatures; ſo the ſacred Requirements of his Law are plainly calculated to promote that deſirable End. Superſtition indeed has frequently put Men upon doing Things which are very grievous and ſhocking to Nature: The idolatrous Prieſts of *Baal* cut and ſlaſhed themſelves, and many ſuch cruel Rites were made Uſe of among the *Gentile* Nations; and, almoſt in every Part of the World, human Sacrifices have been, at one Time or other, offered to their Deities. The Accounts which are given us by credible Authors of the rigid Penances that the

Heathen

Heathen Devotees in the *Eaſt-Indies* undergo, are aſtoniſhing. Some of them, for a long Time together, powder their Hair with Aſhes, and lay themſelves naked on the Ground without Bed or Covering: Some voluntarily diſtort and diſlocate their Bones, or bind themſelves by ſtrict Vows to remain continually in one Poſture: Others load themſelves with heavy Chains which they drag after them, as long as they live; or lie down in the Way by which the Chariots that carry their Idols are to paſs in their ſacred Proceſſions, that they may run over them, and cruſh and mangle their Bodies. And, even among profeſſed *Chriſtians* themſelves, Superſtition has often laid heavy Yokes upon the Diſciples, of which it were eaſy to produce many Inſtances. But theſe are the Inventions of Men, which God hath no where commanded in his Word and Law: All that is there injoined comes in Effect to this, that we ſhould ſhun whatſoever is unbecoming us as reaſonable Creatures, moral Agents; and ſhould endeavour to begin to be holy and happy here, that we may be fitted for a State of complete eternal Felicity and Glory hereafter. What a kind Maſter, what a gracious Sovereign, do we ſerve, whoſe *very Service is the trueſt Freedom*,

Freedom, whoſe Work carries *Delight* in it's Nature and Exerciſe, and whom to obey is to be happy?

And now the natural Concluſion from all that hath been offered concerning the Divine Commandments is this, that we ſhould apply ourſelves with Zeal and Diligence to yield an uniform Obedience to them, through the whole Courſe of our Lives; and that we ſhould do it with Chearfulneſs and Delight. The very Excellency of the Commands themſelves ſhould be a powerful Motive and Inducement to engage us to the Obſervance of them. As far as we are conſcious of doing this, we have the approving Teſtimony of our own Minds, as having acted a right and worthy Part, agreeable to the beſt Principles of our Frame, and becoming the Dignity of the rational Nature. And this is a Source of inward Satisfaction and Joy, which the World cannot give nor take away. To which it may be added, that it hath a Tendency to procure the Eſteem and Good-will of our Fellow-creatures, and that *Good Name which*, the the wiſe Man tells us, is *rather to be choſen than great Riches*. Prov. xxii. 1. A Courſe of uniform unaffected Piety and Virtue has ſuch genuine Charms, ſuch a Beauty as well

well as Dignity in it, that there are few but are willing to have it thought that they eſteem and approve it. Hence *Virtue* and *Praiſe* are joined together *Phil.* iv. 8. But that which ought to have the greateſt Weight with us, and which renders the Practice of the Duties required of us properly an Act of Religion, is, that we are obliged to it by the expreſs Authority of God himſelf, our great Creator, and our ſupreme and rightful Lord; and not only by his Authority, but by his Goodneſs, as he is our moſt gracious and bountiful Benefactor. We are bound to it, as Men, by the Law of our Creation; and we are under peculiar additional Engagements to it, as we are *Chriſtians*. The very End of *Chriſt*'s Coming into the World, and of what he did and ſuffered for us, was that *we might ſerve God in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs before him, all the Days of our Lives*, Luke i. 74, 75. All the Riches of the Divine Grace, all the Wonders of redeeming Love, which are ſet before us in the Goſpel, are deſigned to engage us to Obedience, and *draw* us to it as *with the Bands of Love*. For this Purpoſe alſo we have the excellent Example of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* propoſed to us as our Pattern, who yielded a moſt

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fect Obedience to all the Divine Commands, and whoſe *Delight is was to do the Will of God*, even in the moſt difficult Inſtances. And ſurely the Example of ſo glorious a Perſon ſhould have a mighty Influence upon us! How engaging is it to conſider, that, whilſt we go on in a dutiful Obedience to the Divine Commands, we follow *Chriſt*, and live as the Son of God lived, when he appeared in human Fleſh? And for our farther Encouragement there are the Aids of the Holy Spirit provided for us, which God hath promiſed to us, and is ever ready to beſtow for *helping our Infirmities*, and aſſiſting our ſincere Endeavours in the Performance of our Duty, amidſt the many Difficulties and Temptations to which we are here expoſed. Finally, the more effectually to animate us to Obedience, the moſt glorious Hopes are ſet before us, and the moſt expreſs Promiſes are given us of an Immortality of Joy and Glory in a better World, as the Reward of our ſincere Obedience in this: And this bleſſed Hope opens to us a new Scene of Divine Pleaſures, which tend to ſpread Satisfaction and Joy through the *Chriſtian* Life. This is what I propoſe to conſider in my next Diſcourſe.

On Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XV.

ROMANS v. 2.

—And rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.

WHOSOEVER impartially conſiders the Duties required of us in the Divine Law muſt be ſenſible that they are in themſelves moſt reaſonable and excellent, and that, when duly obſerved, they have a Tendency, in the Nature of Things, to promote our true Satisfaction and Happineſs, even in this preſent State: But yet it cannot be denied, that there are many Difficulties and Diſcouragements which attend the Practice of *true Religion and*

and Godlineſs here on Earth. Such is the Weakneſs of our Nature in it's preſent Degeneracy, that we often find a great Backwardneſs and Indiſpoſition in our Hearts to the Performance of our Duty; the Work of Holineſs is imperfect, even in the beſt of Men; we carry about with us irregular Appetites and Paſſions, which it requireth no ſmall Pains to mortify and ſubdue; and we are in continual Danger from the Snares and Temptations of a ſinful World, and the Influence of it's corrupt Cuſtoms and evil Examples: To which may be added the bitter Cenſures and Perſecutions to which good Men are frequently expoſed.—It has often happened, that a ſteady Adherence to the Cauſe of *Truth and Righteouſneſs* hath ſubjected them to great temporal Evils: They have been obliged to abandon their deareſt worldly Comforts and Enjoyments, and to ſubmit to the moſt grievous Sufferings, to Pain, Reproach, Ignominy, and even *Death itſelf*, for the Sake of *Religion and a good Conſcience*. This is what every true *Chriſtian* muſt be prepared for in Heart and Reſolution, though he may never be put to the actual Trial of it. If therefore *this preſent Life* were all we were to expect, and if there were not a better World

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in Proſpect, where we may *hope* to be freed from the Evils to which we are now expoſed, and to arrive to the true Perfection and Happineſs of our Nature, we ſhould be in great Danger of ſinking under the Diſcouragements that lie upon us. It hath pleaſed God therefore, in his infinite Wiſdom and Goodneſs, to ſet before us the moſt glorious Proſpects in the *Promiſes of his Word*, which lay a ſolid Foundation for the moſt ſublime and *joyful Hope*. And this added to the Excellency of the Divine Precepts, in themſelves conſidered, gives a good Man a vaſt Superiority, in Point of real Satisfaction and Happineſs, to the moſt proſperous wicked Man upon Earth, and renders a holy and virtuous Life beyond Compariſon more eligible and delightful than a Life of Vice and Sin.

St. *Paul*, ſpeaking in his own Name, and in that of *true Believers*, declares, that, *being juſtified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *by whom we have Acceſs by Faith into this Grace wherein we ſtand*. And he adds, that *we rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*. Where it is plainly intimated, that it is the Privilege and Happineſs of ſincere *Chriſtians*, who *live and walk by Faith*, that

they have *a Hope of the heavenly Glory*; and that this *Hope*, in Proportion as it prevaileth is a Source of pure and ſacred *Joy*.

Hope in general is the Expectation of ſome Good which we deſire, but which we are not at preſent in the actual Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of. When there appears to be but a ſmall Probability of obtaining it, our *Hope* is weak and languid; when the Probability is, or appears to us to be, ſtrong, our *Hope* is lively and vigorous; and, when it arriveth to ſuch a high Degree, that it may be called *a moral Certainty*, this produceth *a confident Expectation* or *Aſſurance*. Mighty is the Influence of *Hope* upon the human Mind: It is this that is the great Spring of Action. That which chiefly animates and invigorates Men's Endeavours and Purſuits, even with regard to their temporal Affairs, is the *Hope* of Something to be obtained and enjoyed, which hath to them the Appearance of Good: But the *Hope* we are now conſidering doth not terminate in the Things of this preſent tranſitory Life and World. The proper Object of the *Chriſtian's Hope* is that *everlaſting Felicity* which is revealed and promiſed in the Goſpel, and which good Men ſhall be made Partaker

takers of in a future State. Hence it is called by the Apoſtle *the Hope of eternal Life*. Tit. iii. 7. And, in the Paſſage before us, *the Hope of the Glory of God*; even that *Glory which ſhall be revealed*, and to which *the Sufferings of this preſent Time are not worthy to be compared*. Rom. viii. 18. It is elſewhere called *eternal Glory*: God is ſaid *to have called us to his eternal Glory by* Chriſt Jeſus. 1 *Pet.* v. 10. 2 *Tim.* ii. 10. And ſurely the *Hope* of this, where it is ſtrong and vigorous, muſt needs fill the Soul with a ſincere and ſolid *Joy*.

But, that this may appear in a more convincing Light, let us diſtinctly conſider, Firſt, The Greatneſs and Excellency of that *future Glory*, which is the Object of the *Chriſtian's Hope*. Secondly, The ſolid Foundation of this *Hope*, or the juſt Grounds that a good Man and ſincere *Chriſtian* hath for his *Hope* of that *future Glory*: And this will naturally lead us to conſider the *Joy* which ariſeth from this *Hope*, and the happy Influence it hath upon the *Chriſtian* Life.

Firſt, Let us conſider the Greatneſs and Excellency of that *future Glory and Felicity* which is the Object of the *Chriſtian's Hope*. It is to convey to us an exalted Notion of the *future heavenly Happineſs*

that it is called *Glory*: And, when it is here called *the Glory of God*, this tendeth ſtill more to heighten the Idea. It is a *Glory* worthy of God, and of which he is very eminently the Author: For *the Gift of God is eternal Life*, which is only another Word for that future *Glory*. Rom. vi. 23. It is a Glory and Felicity in ſome Meaſure reſembling that of God himſelf, as far as the Capacity of our limited Natures will admit. The ſacred Writers ſeem to be as it were at a Loſs for proper Words to deſcribe it: They call it *a Crown of Glory, Riches of Glory, an exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. They intimate to us that it far tranſcends the higheſt Conceptions we are at preſent able to form concerning it: *It doth not yet appear what we ſhall be*. Yet ſeveral Things are told us, with Relation to it, which may aſſiſt us in forming ſuch a Notion of that *future Bleſſedneſs* as is ſufficient to raiſe our Deſires, and quicken our Aſpirations after it.

It is repreſented as a State where we ſhall be abſolutely freed from all the Evils to which we are now expoſed: It is therefore called *a Reſt: There remaineth a Reſt for the People of God*. Heb. iv. 9. And it is declared, that *bleſſed are the Dead which*

which die in the Lord, that they may reſt from their Labours, and their Works do follow them. Rev. xiv. 13. They ſhall *reſt* from all their preſent Toils and Troubles, out of the Reach of *the Pride of Men, and the Strife of Tongues.* There ſhall be nothing to annoy them, or to diſturb their peaceful Tranquillity: For *God ſhall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain; for the former Things, i. e.* all the former Evils, *are paſſed away.* Rev. xxi. 4.

As to the poſitive Notion of that *heavenly Felicity*, it includes the full Perfection of our intire Nature, Body and Soul, in the Enjoyment of all that Good which is neceſſary to complete our Satisfaction and Happineſs. *The Spirits of juſt Men ſhall then be made perfect.* Heb. xii. 23. They ſhall be free from all the Remains of Corruption and moral Defilement which cleaved to them here on Earth, and their Faculties and Powers ſhall be opened and enlarged to a wonderful Degree: Their Underſtandings ſhall be irradiated with the Light of Divine Knowledge; their Wills wholly conformed to the Will of God; their Affections regular, h amonious, and pure; in a Word, they ſhall be

holy as God is holy; ſo that they ſhall have an inward never-failing Source of *Divine Satisfaction and Joy*. And even their *Bodies* themſelves ſhall be *raiſed in Incorruption, in Power, and in Glory*. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. So wonderfully ſhall they be refined, that the Apoſtle calls them *ſpiritual Bodies*. They ſhall no longer be Clogs and Incumbrances to their Souls, but the ready Inſtruments of their nobleſt Operations, and arrayed in celeſtial Splendor *like the glorious Body of* Chriſt *himſelf*. *Phil.* iii. 21.

And, as their Natures ſhall then be raiſed to a high Degree of Perfection and Excellence, ſo they ſhall be converſant with the nobleſt Objects, and their Exerciſes and Enjoyments ſhall be ſuch as are ſuited to their perfected Natures and enlarged Capacities. Nothing can poſſibly give us an higher Idea of the Happineſs of *the Saints in Heaven*, than that they ſhall there be admitted to *the beatifick Viſion and Fruition of the Deity: Bleſſed are the Pure in Heart* ſaith our Saviour, *for they ſhall ſee God*. Matt. v. 8. And Oh how delightful will it be to *behold* the adorable *Jehovah* in all that harmonious Variety of Perfections and Attributes which belong to his infinite Nature! To *behold* almighty Power, unerring

unerring Wiſdom, boundleſs Goodneſs and Love, ſpotleſs Purity and Righteouſneſs, in their beautiful and glorious Original! Now as the Apoſtle ſpeaks, *we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face. Now I know but in Part, but then ſhall I know even as I am known.* 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And this *Viſion of the Deity* ſhall have a tranſforming Influence: *I ſhall behold thy Face in Righteouſneſs*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt; *I ſhall be ſatisfied when I awake with thy Likeneſs.* Pſ. xvii. 15. *The Bleſſed above* ſhall have ſuch clear intuitive Views of God's infinite Glory and Lovelineſs as ſhall both diffuſe unutterable *Bliſs and Joy* through all their Powers, and ſhall impreſs them more and more with his moſt amiable Image and Reſemblance: God ſhall then be, in the moſt eminent Senſe, *their Portion*, and they ſhall receive from him the moſt abundant Communications of his Goodneſs; ſo that, if all the *Fulneſs of the Deity* can make them happy, they ſhall be ever ſo.

And, as they ſhall then *ſee God*, ſo they ſhall be with *Chriſt*, admitted to the glorious Preſence of the Redeemer: *I deſire to depart, and to be with* Chriſt ſaith St. *Paul*, Phil. i. 23. And our Lord himſelf, in his ſolemn Addreſs to his *heavenly Fa-*

ther, expreſſeth himſelf thus: *Father, I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou haſt given me.* John xvii. 24. The matchleſs Glory of the Divine *Immanuel*, the Wonders of his Love, and his great Atchievements for our *Salvation*, ſhall be the conſtant Subject of their *Praiſes*, and fill their Souls with ineffable Raptures of devout *Admiration, Love, and Joy*. Each renewed Reflection upon their own Felicity ſhall heighten their Gratitude to the Saviour, and keep a Senſe of their Obligations to him ever freſh upon their Minds. And not only ſhall they with raviſhed Hearts *behold his Glory*, but ſhall be Sharers in it, according to the Meaſure of their Capacities: He ſhall take them into his neareſt Embraces, and ſhall *rejoice* in them, and they in him, without Interruption or Allay, for ever.

Another Ingredient in that *heavenly Felicity*, which ſhould greatly recommend it to our Eſteem and Choice, is, that there we ſhall be aſſociated to *an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born, and to the Spirits of the Juſt made perfect*. Heb. xii. 22, 23. What a noble Satisfaction muſt it yield to look around through thoſe boundleſs Realms of Light and Glory,

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and behold numberleſs Orders of holy and happy Beings, all chearfully obeying and adoring *the Lord their Maker*, and employing their excellent Faculties and Powers in in doing his Pleaſure, and all rejoicing in each other's Happineſs! What are the Pleaſures of mortal Friendſhip, compared with the refined Delights which ſhall ariſe from the bliſsful Society and perfect Friendſhip of Angels and Saints, all animated with the moſt lovely Diſpoſitions, united in inviolable Harmony and Concord, and all joining and aſſiſting one another in thoſe Exerciſes and Enjoyments which are beſt ſuited to the Nature and Oeconomy of that heavenly World!

From the brief Account that has been given of that *future Glory and Felicity*, which is repreſented as the great Object of our *Hope*, it appears to be the higheſt and nobleſt our Natures are capable of. And it mightily heightens all this to conſider, that, as was before hinted, it ſhall be *eternal* in it's Duration: It is frequently deſcribed to us under the Character of *Life everlaſting, eternal Glory*. If that *promiſed Glory* were to be but of a temporary Continuance, it would greatly diminiſh the Satisfaction ariſing from it: For, the greater the Happineſs is, the more uneaſy would

would the Apprehenſion of loſing it be. But it is a moſt tranſporting Thought that this Happineſs ſhall *never have an End!* After Millions of Ages paſt, beyond the Power of human Arithmetic to compute, it ſhall be no nearer a Period than it was, when they firſt entered upon it. And in this it eminently differs from the Riches, Glory, and Pleaſures of this preſent World, which at beſt can laſt no longer than during the ſhort Term of this frail and tranſitory Life. How mean, how low, how fleeting are the moſt admired earthly Enjoyments, compared with that ſublime, ſubſtantial, everlaſting *Bliſs and Glory*, prepared in *Heaven* for us!

Having ſhewn the Greatneſs and Excellency of that future *Glory and Felicity* which is the noble Object of the *Chriſtian's Faith and Hope*, let us now conſider the ſolid Foundation of this *Hope*, or the ſure Grounds upon which the good Man and ſincere *Chriſtian hopes* for that *heavenly Glory*.

And here it muſt be laid down as a Principle, that the proper Foundation of the *Chriſtian's Hope* is the gracious *Promiſe and Covenant* of God in *Jeſus Chriſt*: That *future eternal Glory* is what we could not have pretended to claim as ſtrictly due to the Merit

Merit of our Services, even though we had yielded a perfect Obedience to the Divine Law. But this is far from being the Caſe: *In many Things we offend all.* Jam. iii. 2. *There is not a juſt Man upon Earth that doeth Good and ſinneth not.* Eccleſ. vii. 20. *We are all of us guilty before God,* and muſt acknowledge, that, *if he ſhould enter into ſtrict Judgment with us, we could not ſtand before him, nor be juſtified in his Sight.* And though from the great Goodneſs of God we might have expected that he would ſhew Mercy to *the truly Penitent,* and not deal with them according to the utmoſt Rigour of Juſtice; yet upon no certain Grounds of Reaſon could we have concluded, that he would, upon ſuch an imperfect Obedience as our's, attended with many Failures and Defects, will ſo tranſcendent a Felicity as that which is ſet before us in the Goſpel, and which includes *a bleſſed Reſurrection and an Eternity of Joy and Glory in the heavenly World.* This dependeth abſolutely upon the free Grace and gracious Favour of God, and upon what it ſeems fit to him in his infinite Wiſdom to determine, and of which we could not pretend to have any Knowledge or Aſſurance, except he ſhould declare his Will concerning it: And this, to

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our unſpeakable Comfort, he has been graciouſly pleaſed to do in the Goſpel. There is indeed great Reaſon to think that good Men in all Ages have had ſome *Hope*, though often but a feeble one, *of Happineſs in a future State*. The ſacred Writer to the *Hebrews* obſerves, concerning *Abraham*, and other antient Patriarchs, that they conſidered themſelves as *Strangers and Pilgrims on the Earth, and deſired a better Country, that is, an heavenly; and that they looked for a City which hath Foundations, whoſe Builder and Maker is God*. Heb. xi. 10, 13, 16. And it is reaſonable to believe, that this their *Hope* was originally founded on *a Divine Revelation and Promiſe*; and that it was a Part of the primitive Religion imparted to the firſt Parents of the human Race. And to this St. *Paul* ſeems to refer, when he ſpeaks of *the Hope of eternal Life, which God that cannot lye promiſed, before the World began*. So our Tranſlators render it, but it had better be rendered *from the Beginning of Ages*, or, as ſome antient Commentators interpret it, *of old Time, from the Beginning* †. And then he adds, that *God hath manifeſted*

† See Dr. *Whitby* on *Tit.* i. 2, 3. See alſo Dr. *Benſon's* Paraphraſe and Notes upon the Place.

ted his Word through Preaching, which (ſaith he) is *committed unto me according to the Commandment of God our Saviour*. Tit. i. 2, 3. Where he intimates, that it was *through the Preaching of the Goſpel*, that the *Promiſe of eternal Life*, which was was more obſcurely ſignified, from the moſt antient Times, was *fully manifeſted* to the World. This alſo ſeems to be the Deſign of that remarkable Paſſage, 2 Tim. i. 10. Where the Apoſtle, after having obſerved, that *God hath ſaved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works, but according to his own Purpoſe and Grace which was given us in* Chriſt Jeſus, *before the World began*, or *from the Beginning of Ages* (for the Phraſe is the ſame here as in the Paſſage before mentioned) adds, that *it is now made manifeſt by the Appearing of our Saviour* Jeſus Chriſt, *who hath aboliſhed Death, and hath brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Goſpel*. 2 Tim. i. 10. *This is the Promiſe*, ſaith St. *John, that he hath promiſed us, even eternal Life*. 1 John ii. 25. *i. e. This is the Promiſe* by Way of Eminency, which is now moſt clearly and expreſly declared and publiſhed to Mankind in the Goſpel Revelation.

It gives a peculiar Force to this *Promiſe* that

that it is brought to us by *the Son of God*, the moſt illuſtrious Meſſenger that could be ſent to aſſure us of it, and whoſe Divine Miſſion is confirmed by the moſt extraordinary and convincing Atteſtations: *This is the Record, that God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.* 1 John v. 11. *The only begotten of the Father, who had Glory with him before the World was*, and was perfectly acquainted with his moſt wiſe and benevolent Counſels and Purpoſes towards Mankind, has made a fuller Declaration of *the Will of God for our Salvation*, than had been ever given before: And he is certainly the propereſt Perſon to bring us the cleareſt and moſt authentic Diſcoveries of that *heavenly Felicity* in all it's Excellency and Glory. He hath himſelf aſſured us that *God ſo loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son*, that *whoſoever believeth in him*, *viz.* with a true, and living, and operative *Faith*, *ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* John iii. 16. And, through the whole Courſe of his Preaching, he frequently directed Men's Hopes and Views to that *everlaſting Glory and Felicity.* How encouraging is the Declaration he made to his Diſciples, a little before he left our World! *Ye believe in God, believe alſo in me.*

me. In my Father's Houſe are many Manſion's; if it were not ſo, I would have told you: I go to prepare a Place for you; I will come again, and receive you unto myſelf, that, where I am, there ye may be alſo. John xiv. 1, 2, 3. And what gave the moſt illuſtrious Confirmation of it was this, that, after having ſubmitted to *Death* for our Sakes, *he roſe again from the Dead, and entered into the heavenly Sanctuary*; by which he hath given a viſible Proof and Aſſurance of that *bleſſed Reſurrection and immmortal Life, which he promiſed, in the Father's Name, to all them that believe and obey him.* Hence that noble Doxology of the Apoſtle *Peter, Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, *who, according to his abundant Mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively Hope, by the Reſurrection of* Jeſus Chriſt *from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in Heaven for us.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

It ſhould farther ſtrengthen our *Faith and Hope*, with Reſpect to that *future Glory*, that God hath been pleaſed, in his great Condeſcenſion, to bring himſelf under the moſt ſolemn Engagements, in a Way of *Covenant*, to confer that *Glory* upon us. *The Promiſe of eternal Life* is not to be

regarded

regarded simply as *a Promise*, which gives a mighty Weight to it; *a Promise* essentially included in that *everlasting Covenant*, of which God himself is the primary glorious Author, and his Son *Jesus Christ* is the *Mediator and Surety*, by whose *Blood* this *Covenant* is ratified. Hence he himself calls his *Blood* the *Blood of the New Testament* or *Covenant*. Matt. xxvi. 28. And the Author of the Epistle to the *Hebrews* calls it *the Blood of the everlasting Covenant*. Heb. xiii. 20. And he declares that *for this Cause* Christ *is the Mediator of the New Testament*, or *Covenant, that by Means of Death—they which are called might receive the Promise of eternal Inheritance*. Heb. ix. 15. This *Covenant* was originally founded in the eternal Councils of the Divine Wisdom and Love, whereby *the Son of God* was designed to the sacred Office of *Mediator and Saviour*. In Consideration of his Undertaking and Accomplishing the great Work committed to him, and of his *Doing and Suffering* what was required of him in order to our *Redemption*, it was agreed that *perishing Sinners* of the human Race should, through his most meritorious *Obedience and Sacrifice*, obtain *the Pardon of their Sins and everlasting Salvation*, upon their hearty Compliance with the gracious Terms which it pleased

pleaſed the Divine Wiſdom to appoint. Hence God is ſaid to have *choſen us in* Chriſt, *before the Foundation of the World.* Eph. i. 4. and to have *given his Son Power over all Fleſh, that he ſhould give eternal Life to as many as the Father had given him.* John xvii. 1, 2. Accordingly our Lord ſeems to claim this *Glory and Happineſs* for them, in Conſequence of his having fulfilled the important Work which was committed to him: *I have glorified thee on the Earth,* ſaith he to his *heavenly Father: I have finiſhed the Work which thou haſt given me to do.—Father, I will that they alſo whom thou haſt given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou haſt given me; for thou lovedſt me, from before the Foundation of the World.* John xvii. 4—24. This lays a proper Foundation for his Interceſſion on our Behalf, and gives it a wonderful Force. We have therefore not only the *Promiſe of God* made to us in the Goſpel *Covenant,* but the Promiſe made to his Son in the *Covenant of Redemption,* for our Security; ſo that, as ſurely as *Chriſt* obeyed, ſuffered, and died, and roſe again for our *Salvation,* ſo ſurely ſhall they who ſincerely believe and obey him be raiſed from the Dead, and ſhall ob-

tain *everlasting Life*: For what can be a more solid Security than this, that *the Promise of eternal Life* is an essential Article of that *Covenant* which was founded in God's everlasting Councils, and was *in the Fulness of Time* confirmed by the *Blood* of *Jesus Christ*, the great appointed *Mediator*; and which is ascertained to us not only by the *Word*, but by the *Oath* of God! So the sacred Writer to the *Hebrews* represents it: *God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the Heirs of Promise the Immutability of his Counsel, confirmed it by an Oath: That by two immutable Things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have strong Consolation, who have fled for Refuge to lay Hold upon the Hope that is set before us; which Hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the Vail, whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus.* Heb. vi. 17—20.

Thus it appears that the *Christian's Hope* of that *future Glory* is originally established upon a solid and immoveable Foundation, even upon the *Promise and Covenant of God in* Jesus Christ, which can never fail: But

still

ſtill it remains to be inquired, what the Terms are upon our Compliance with which we may apply that *Promiſe* to our own Caſe, and take to ourſelves the Comfort of it: And the Conſideration of this muſt be reſerved for another Diſcourſe.



On Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.

DISCOURSE XVI.

ROMANS v. 2.

—And rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.

HAVING conſidered the Greatneſs and Excellency of that *future Glory* which is the great Object of the *Chriſtian*'s *Hope*, as alſo the ſolid Foundation of that *Hope*, as eſtabliſhed upon the *Promiſe and Covenant of God through* Jeſus Chriſt, it now remaineth that we conſider upon what Grounds a good Man and ſincere *Chriſtian* may claim an Intereſt in that *promiſed Felicity*, and apply it to his own particular Caſe: For it is neceſſary that he ſhould

be able in ſome Degree to do this, in order to his *Rejoicing in Hope of the Glory of God.*

And here it muſt be obſerved, that, as the *Promiſe* of that future *heavenly Glory* is made to us in the Way of *Covenant*, ſo there are Terms ſtipulated and required of us, in order to our being admitted to a Participation of the *promiſed Felicity*. Not indeed any Thing in a Way of proper Merit and Equivalent, which might tend to diminiſh the Freedom of the Grant; yet ſomething in a Way of neceſſary Qualification, on the Part of thoſe on whom it ſhall be conferred: For though this *eternal Life be the Gift of God through* Jeſus Chriſt *our Lord. Rom.* vi. 23. and wholly the Effect of ſovereign Grace; yet the Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs of God, as the moral Governor of the World, require that it ſhould be conferred in ſuch a Manner as is moſt becoming his own glorious Perfections, and agreeable to the ſacred Rules of eternal Order; and therefore that it ſhould not be conferred on all Men promiſcuouſly, but on thoſe only who ſhould be properly qualified for obtaining and enjoying it. Accordingly it is evident from the whole New Teſtament that there are Terms and Qualifications inſiſted upon

upon, without which we cannot, according to the Goſpel Covenant, lay Claim to the *heavenly Glory*: It therefore highly concerneth us to know what thoſe Terms and Qualifications are. They are ſometimes all ſummed up in one Word, *Faith* or *Believing*: Thus our Saviour declares, that *God ſo loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life.* John iii. 16. To the ſame Purpoſe we are told, that *he that believeth on the Son hath everlaſting Life.* John iii. 36. We are often ſaid *to be juſtified by Faith*, and *to be ſaved by Faith.* But then, to prevent a wrong Underſtanding of theſe Paſſages, there are others which inſiſt upon the Neceſſity of *real Holineſs and Obedience* in order to *Salvation.* Thus it is declared, that *unto them that, by a patient Continuance in Well-doing, ſeek for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, God will give eternal Life.* Rom. ii. 7. And that *bleſſed are they that do his Commandments, that they may have Right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the Gates into the City.* Rev. xxii. 14. Where it is intimated, that none *have a Right* to the *heavenly Glory*, but they that yield *a dutiful Obedience to God's Commandments.* The ſame Thing is in-

tended by that Declaration, *Heb.* v. 9. that Chriſt *is the Author of eternal Salvation unto all them that obey him.* And who thoſe are that may be ſaid *to obey him* the Apoſtle plainly ſignifies, when he tells us, that *the Grace of God, which bringeth Salvation, teacheth us, that, denying Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World.* Tit. ii. 11, 12. It is farther to be obſerved, that in many Paſſages of the ſacred Writings a great Streſs is laid upon *Repentance*, as abſolutely neceſſary to our Obtaining *the Pardon of our Sins*, and having an Intereſt in *the promiſed Salvation:* And this *Repentance* includes not only a Confeſſion of our Sins and godly Sorrow for them, but *a real Converſion*, or Turning from the Love and Practice of them to Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. It is called *Repentance unto Salvation.* 2 Cor. vii. 10. and *Repentance unto Life.* Acts xi. 18. And it is joined by St. *Paul* with *Faith in our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt, as being of equal Importance, and equally the Subject of his Preaching. Acts xx. 21. where he declareth, that *he teſtified both to the* Jews, *and alſo to the* Greeks, *Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt. Upon comparing theſe ſeveral

Paſſages

Paſſages together, to which many others might be added, it is manifeſt that, when *Faith* or *Believing* is repreſented as the Summary of what is required of us in order to *Salvation*, it is not to be underſtood of a mere ſpeculative notional Aſſent to the Truth of the Goſpel, or of a mere Reliance on *Chriſt* for *Salvation*, though both theſe are included in it; but it farther ſignifies a hearty and practical Compliance with the whole Method of *Salvation* held forth to us through *Jeſus Chriſt*. It hath a Reſpect not only to the Doctrines and Promiſes, but to the Laws of the Goſpel; and muſt be taken as in an inſeparable Connection with *Repentance and holy Obedience*. Accordingly the Apoſtle *James* declares, that *Faith without Works is dead, being alone*. James ii. 20. And St. *Paul*, who lays ſuch a Streſs on *Divine Faith*, plainly ſhews what he intends by it, when he ſaith, that *in* Chriſt Jeſus *neither Circumciſion availeth any Thing, nor Uncircumciſion, but Faith which worketh by Love*. Gal. v. 6. Or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, *Circumciſion is nothing, and Uncircumciſion is nothing, but the Keeping the Commandments of God*. 1 Cor. vii. 19.

It appears then, with great Evidence, that *a ſincere and dutiful Obedience*, or *real Holineſs*

Holineſs of Heart and Life, is neceſſary to our attaining to a well-grounded *Hope of the future Glory*. It is neceſſary by the Appointment of God, and the Conſtitution of the Goſpel *Covenant*, and it is neceſſary in the Nature of the Thing; becauſe, without this, we cannot be properly qualified for the Enjoyment of that *heavenly Felicity*, which by the Account given of it is a State of perfect Holineſs, Goodneſs, and Purity.

For any Perſons therefore to pretend to *hope for the promiſed eternal Salvation*, whilſt they indulge themſelves in known preſumptuous Sin and Diſobedience, and take no Care to *order their Converſation aright*, according to the Laws of the Goſpel, is not a true *Chriſtian Hope*, but a vain and unwarrantable Preſumption: It is *the Hope of the Hypocrite, which*, we are told, *ſhall periſh*, and which is likened to a *Spider's Web*, that ſhall be ſoon ſwept away and deſtroyed. *Job* viii. 13, 14. And, on the other Hand, the Man that *heartily repenteth* him of his paſt Sins, and *herein exerciſeth himſelf to keep a Conſcience void of Offence both towards God and towards Man, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World*; and who, at the ſame Time, from a humbling Senſe of his own manifold

manifold Failures and Defects, placeth his whole Confidence, not in his own Merits or Righteouſneſs, but in the free and ſovereign Grace of of God through *Jeſus Chriſt*, the great appointed Mediator and Saviour; ſuch a Perſon may upon good Grounds apply the Goſpel *Promiſes* of that *future Glory* to his own Caſe, and may *lay Hold on the Hope that is ſet before him*. And, the more he abounds in *the Fruits of the Spirit*, and in the Exerciſe of the *Chriſtian* Graces and Virtues, in Purity, Humility, Temperance, Patience, and eſpecially in Love to God and *Jeſus Chriſt*, and Charity towards Mankind, the more lively and vigorous may his *Hope* juſtly be. Thus, as he *groweth in Grace*, his *Hope* will alſo grow and gather Strength; and this, inſtead of rendering him negligent and remiſs, will greatly animate him in his Duty: For *every Man that hath this Hope in him purifieth himſelf even as* Chriſt *is pure*. 1 John iii. 3. And, when this *Divine Hope* is thus enlarged, and every Virtue along with it, the *Chriſtian* is made more and more *meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*. He hath in ſome Meaſure that *eternal Life* begun in him here on Earth, the *Earneſt* and *Firſt-Fruits* of that *future Glory*: And they that have

theſe

theſe *Firſt-Fruits* may, with a *joyful Expectation, wait for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of the Body*, when their Happineſs ſhall be completed. *Rom.* viii. 23.

This is the regular Way in which we may reaſonably expect to have our *Hope* increaſed and eſtabliſhed, *viz. by a diligent and patient Continuance in Well-doing*, and endeavouring to make a conſtant Progreſs in Holineſs and Virtue, and to get our Souls more and more formed into a godlike and heavenly Temper: It is in this Way that the beſt of Men in all Ages have attained to a comfortable *Hope* of eternal Salvation, and ſome of them to what is called *a full Aſſurance of Hope*. Heb. vi. 11. St. *Paul* declares concerning himſelf, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finiſhed my Courſe, I have kept the Faith. Henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteouſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that Day*. 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. And again, *Our Rejoicing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, not with fleſhly Wiſdom, but by the Grace of God, we have had our Converſation in the World*. 2 Cor. i. 12. His *Rejoicing* aroſe from *a conſcious Sincerity*, and the inward Witneſs in his own Breaſt, concerning

ning his having acted up to the *Christian* Character in the Course of a holy and useful Life.

And, when to this inward Testimony of *a good Conscience* are added the sacred *Consolations of God's holy Spirit*, this tends mightily to heighten the good Man's *Hope* and render it complete. Remarkable to this Purpose is that Passage of the Apostle, *Rom.* viii. 16, 17. *The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirits, that we are the Children of God; and, if Children, then Heirs; Heirs of God, and Joint-heirs with* Christ; *Heirs*, as he elsewhere expresseth it, *according to the Hope of eternal Life.* Tit. iii. 7. The good Spirit of God, by his Divine Influence, gives a farther Light and Force to the Testimony of our own self-approving Minds: To his gracious Assistances we must ascribe it, that those holy Affections and godlike Dispositions are strengthened and enlarged in us, and carried forth into a vigorous Exercise; which are the Characters and Evidences of our *Sonship*. It is by the Holy Ghost that *the Love of God is shed abroad in our Hearts*, in the delightful Sense of it. *Rom.* v. 5. And this tends to dispel those Jealousies and Fears which might otherwise be apt to arise in the Minds of sincere *Chri-*

Chriſtians themſelves. Accordingly St. *Paul* prays for the *Believers* to whom he writes, that *the God of Hope would fill them with Joy and Peace in believing, that they might abound in Hope through the Power of the Holy Ghoſt.* Rom. xv. 13. It is becauſe God by his Spirit is the glorious Author of this *Hope*, that the Apoſtle there calls him *the God of Hope*; and he elſewhere obſerves that *God even our Father hath given us everlaſting Conſolation and good Hope through Grace.* 2 Theſſ. ii. 16. And it is agreeable to the beſt Notions we can form of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs to believe that God is ready to grant *needful Aſſiſtances and Conſolations* to good and upright Souls, for carrying them on with Conſtancy and Alacrity in his Service, amidſt the many Difficulties and Temptations of this preſent State; eſpecially conſidering, that theſe *Aſſiſtances* are communicated in ſuch a Way as is perfectly conſiſtent with free Agency and the juſt Order of our Faculties, and ſo as not to hinder or ſuperſede, but rather to befriend and help forward, the Operations of our own Minds.

And now our Way is clear to what I propoſed, in the laſt Place, to conſider, *viz.* the *Joy* ariſing from this *Hope*. *We rejoice,*

rejoice, ſaith the Apoſtle here, *in Hope of the Glory of God*; and in ſeveral other Paſſages of Scripture it is plainly ſignified, that there is a very cloſe Connection between this *Divine Hope and Joy*. *Chriſtians* are repreſented as *rejoicing in Hope, patient in Tribulation*. Rom. xii. 12. And it is mentioned as their Duty, as well as Privilege, *to hold faſt the Confidence, and rejoicing in the Hope firm unto the End*. Heb. iii. 6. And indeed it is evident, that the *Hope* here referred to muſt, in the Nature of Things, tend to produce and promote a ſacred *Joy*. *Hope* in general is a delightful Affection, and in ſome Meaſure anticipates the Poſſeſſion and Enjoyment of the Good *hoped for*; and, the greater and more excellent the Thing *hoped for* is, the *Joy*, ariſing from the *Hope* of obtaining it, will be proportionably of a higher and nobler Kind. Since therefore that *future eternal Glory and Felicity* infinitely tranſcendeth whatſoever Enjoyments this Earth can afford, the *Joy* which the *Hope* of it createth in the Soul muſt be far ſuperior to that which reſulteth from any worldly *Hopes* or *Expectations*. St. *Peter* emphatically ſtyles it *a Joy unſpeakable and full of Glory*, or, as the Words might literally be rendered, *a Joy unſpeakable and glorified*;

a *Joy*

a *Joy* by which we are in ſome Meaſure made *Partakers* of the *heavenly Glory*. 1. Pet. i. 8. It is true that the *Joy* which is cauſed by worldly Objects and Enjoyments may ſtrike more forcibly upon the Imagination, and make more lively Impreſſions for a While, as it ariſeth from Things preſent and ſenſible; but it is a tumultuous *Joy*, evanid and tranſitory, and is juſtly compared by the wiſe Man *to the Crackling of Thorns under a Pot*. Eccleſ. vii. 6. The Things which are the Objects of worldly *Hope and Joy* are fading and unſatisfying in their Nature, greater in Expectation than in Poſſeſſion; ſo that the very Enjoyment diſappoints: But the *Joy* we are now ſpeaking of is of a more ſtable and permanent, as well as of a more ſpiritual and refined Nature. It is not a mere ſudden Tranſport, which, like a tranſient Blaze, is ſoon over; nor is it ſeated merely in the Paſſions, or the Product of a warm Imagination; but it is a ſolid ſubſtantial Thing, deeply fixed in the Heart. It hath been already obſerved, that the *Chriſtian's Hope* ordinarily proceedeth by gradual Advances, according to the Progreſs we make in the *Chriſtian* Virtues and in the Divine Life: In like Manner the *Joy* which ariſeth from this

Hope

Hope muſt ordinarily be expected to be gradually progreſſive, not complete at once, but enlarging and heightening by Degrees, till it becomes in ſome Meaſure the habitual ſettled Temper of the Soul, and produceth an abiding Peace there. Hence, in the Paſſage mentioned before, *Joy and Peace* are joined together: *The God of Hope fill you with Joy and Peace in Believing.* Rom. xv. 13.

From the Account which hath been given of this Evangelical *Hope*, the ſolid Foundation upon which it is eſtabliſhed, and the ſpiritual *Joy* which reſulteth from it, it is manifeſt that it muſt needs have a great Tendency to promote our Happineſs, even in this preſent State: It is in ſome Meaſure *the Beginning, the Earneſt, of Heaven,* and *a Foretaſte* of thoſe pure and ſatisfying *Pleaſures which are at God's right Hand for evermore.* When the *Chriſtian* hath this *Hope* in him, who can deſcribe the bleſſed Temper of his Soul! That *Peace of God which paſſeth all Underſtanding keeps his Heart and Mind in* Chriſt Jeſus. He enjoys a Divine Satisfaction and Complacency which no Affluence of worldly Riches, no Splendor of Titles and Dignities, no ſenſual Pleaſures and Gratifications can furniſh: If weighed in the Balance againſt *all the King-*

doms of this World and the Glory of them, they would be found light and vain in the Compariſon.

And, as this Divine *Hope* and *Joy* is happy and delightful in itſelf, ſo it is very beneficial in it's Conſequences, and produceth the moſt excellent Effects: It *purifieth the Heart*, and engageth us to *cleanſe ourſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit*. It is the moſt effectual Preſervative againſt the Influence of vicious Affections, and corrupt Luſts, and the fatal Allurements of thoſe ſenſual Pleaſures which captivate the Soul, and ſubject Reaſon to fleſhly Appetites: It animates our Obedience, and cauſeth us *to run the Way of God's Commandments* with Vigour and Delight, and lays a proper Foundation for a true Greatneſs and Nobleneſs of Spirit. As far as any Man is under the Influence of it, he is inſpired with a generous Diſdain of every Thing that is baſe and falſe, ſordid and impure. None of thoſe *Pleaſures of Sin which are but for a Seaſon* will be able to entice him, who hath his *Hopes and Views* fixed on that *Fulneſs of Joy* which is in *God's immediate Preſence above*. No Proſpect of worldly Riches will bribe that Man from his Duty who looketh forward with *a ſtedfaſt Hope* to the *durable Riches and Righteouſneſs*, *the*

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incorruptible heavenly Treaſures which God hath prepared for them that love and obey him: Nor will all the Glories which flatter the Ambition of vain Men have much Influence upon him who ſeeketh for a ſuperior *Glory, Honour, and Immortality in the higheſt Heavens.* Far from envying the Men of this World who have their Portion in this Life, he diſdains to take up with ſo mean an Happineſs: He hath a Soul above theſe worldly Advantages: For he extends his Proſpects to *Eternity*, reaching forth with noble and vigorous Aſpirations after a nearer Conformity to God, the ſupreme original Excellence; and after the *eternal* Enjoyment of his beatific Preſence and Love. Such are the natural and happy Effects of this *Hope of the Glory of God*, and the *Joy* reſulting from it, when it poſſeſſeth the Heart and reigneth there.

To this it may be added, that this *Divine Hope and Joy* will be more effectual, than any Thing elſe can be, to ſupport us under all the *Tribulations* of this preſent State; Accordingly the Apoſtle here, after having ſaid, *We rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*, immediately adds, *And not only ſo, but we glory in Tribulation alſo.* The Word in the Original, here rendered *glory*, is the ſame that was juſt before rendered *rejoice*; and it

properly ſignifies *an exulting and triumphant Joy*. Others may in ſome Meaſure bear up under *Afflictions*, but the true *Chriſtian* alone, who is animated with this *bleſſed Hope*, hath juſt Grounds of *Rejoicing* in them: For he is aſſured that *this light Affliction, which is but for a Moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory*. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Hence St. *Peter*, ſpeaking of that *eternal Salvation* which is propoſed to us in the Goſpel as the great Object of our *Hope*, expreſſeth himſelf thus: *Wherein, i. e.* in *Hope* or *Expectation* of which *Salvation ye greatly rejoice, though now, for a Seaſon, if need be, ye are in Heavineſs through manifold Temptations*. 1 Pet. i. 6. It is obſerved concerning the *Hebrews* that, *when they endured a great Fight of Afflictions, and were made a Gazing-Stock both by Afflictions and Reproaches, they took joyfully the Spoiling of their Goods, knowing in themſelves, that in Heaven they had a better and more enduring Subſtance*. Heb. x. 32, 33, 34. Animated by this *Divine Hope*, the Apoſtles *rejoiced that they were counted worthy to ſuffer Shame for the Name of* Chriſt. Acts. v. 41. And when *Paul* and *Silas* had *many Stripes laid upon them* by the Command of the Magiſtrates of *Philippi*, and were *thruſt into the inner Pri-*

Priſon, and their Feet made faſt in the Stocks; their Hearts were ſo filled with a *Divine Joy*, that they made *the Dungeon* reſound with *Songs of Praiſe*. Acts xvi. 24, 25.

But that which eſpecially ſhews the great Advantage of this Divine *Hope*, and the *Joy* which ſpringeth from it, is, that it is capable of yielding ſtrong Conſolations and Supports againſt *the Fears of Death itſelf*: For *the Righteous hath Hope in his Death*. Prov. xiv. 32. In that awful Moment, when Nature is ſinking in all it's Powers, this *Hope* ſcattereth the Clouds and Darkneſs which ſeem then to cover the Face of Things, and opens a bright and glorious Scene. *Death* then appears not merely as putting a Period to this preſent Life, but as an Introduction to *a happy Immortality*. Bad Men may, by the Force of natural Courage, or what is called *a Principle of Honour*, or under the Influence of ſome ſtrong Paſſion, or perhaps in Conſequence of their having wrought themſelves up to a great Degree of Hardneſs and obſtinate Infidelity, outbrave *Death*, and ſeem to meet it without Terror; but they cannot be ſaid to *have Hope in their Death*: And, if Conſcience be awakened on a *Dying-bed*, the Apprehenſion of *future Puniſhments* for a

paſt wicked Life, which ſometimes comes with great Force even upon the moſt hardened Sinners, whether they will or no, cauſeth ſuch Pangs and Agonies of Soul as no bodily Pains or Tortures can equal, and which a wiſe Man would not undergo for all the Pleaſures of a vicious Life. It is *Religion* alone that can inable a Man both to live well, and to die ſafely and comfortably. Many Inſtances there have been of Perſons who through the *Hopes* of the Goſpel have *rejoiced in Death*, and *triumphed* over it: Under the Languiſhings of a weak and dying Body, *when Fleſh and Heart were ready to fail them*, they have had ſome *joyful Prelibations of the Glory* prepared for them, or at leaſt have been inabled, with a firm Confidence, and in peaceful Tranquillity, to *commit their departing Spirits to their moſt merciful heavenly Father, and to the Saviour who died for them, and roſe again.* Happy thoſe who, when they ſee their *Diſſolution* approaching, can upon upon good Grounds ſay with *a Divine Faith and Hope, O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory? The Sting of Death is Sin, and the Strength of Sin is the Law: But Thanks be to God, which giveth us the Victory through our Lord* Jeſus Chriſt. 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, 58.

I would

I would conclude with exhorting you to labour to get this *Hope of the Glory of God*, which is the proper Foundation of ſpiritual *Joy*, more confirmed and eſtabliſhed. This *Hope* and *Joy* is far from being equal in all *Chriſtians:* It admits of various Degrees, and in ſome good Minds is comparatively weak and low. This, when it is not owing to the Prevalency of a melancholy Temper and Conſtitution, is to be charged either upon their not having right Notions of the Nature and gracious Terms of the Goſpel-*Covenant*, or upon their not taking due Care by a diligent Uſe of all proper Means to keep their *Hope* ſtrong and vigorous: And this is certainly a very culpable Neglect. It is the Duty of every true *Chriſtian* to do what he can to get his Doubts and Fears diſpelled, and to entertain large and worthy Apprehenſions of the free and ſovereign Grace and Goodneſs of God in *Jeſus Chriſt*. It is an uncomfortable and unnatural State to live in an anxious Suſpenſe of Mind, with regard to a Matter of ſuch vaſt Conſequence as our Title to *eternal Salvation:* We ſhould labour therefore to get out of this Perplexity, and not reſt contented till, by *a lively Faith*, by *fervent Prayer*, by the frequent Exerciſe of the *Chriſtian* Virtues, by *abounding in the Fruits of the Spirit*, and endeavouring to get our Souls

formed into a greater *Meetneſs for Heaven*, we have our *Hope* more and more ſtrengthened and enlarged, ſo as to lay a ſolid Foundation for an inward Peace and Satisfaction of Mind. And we muſt take particular Care to guard againſt every Thing that is inconſiſtent with this *Divine Hope*, and eſpecially againſt Indulging ourſelves in the Practice of *wilful preſumptuous Sin*: For every ſuch Sin will make an unhappy Breach upon our *Hope* and *Joy*, which cannot be repaired till we are effectually recovered from it by a *ſincere Repentance and new Obedience*. Let us therefore *lay aſide every Weight, and the Sin that doth ſo eaſily beſet us*; and *let us run with Patience the Race that is ſet before as, looking unto* Jeſus, *the Author and Finiſher of our Faith: Forgetting thoſe Things which are behind, and reaching forth unto thoſe Things which are before, let us preſs towards the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in* Jeſus Chriſt: *And may the God of all Grace, who hath called us unto his eternal Glory by* Chriſt Jeſus, *make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you. To him be Glory and Dominion for ever.* Amen.

Prejudices

Prejudices againſt Religion removed, and the Practice of Piety and Virtue recommended, as the higheſt Pleaſure and Delight.

DISCOURSE XVII.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.

STRONG and powerful are the Charms of *Pleaſure*: It draweth us with a mighty Force, which we are ſcarce able to reſiſt: Nor is this to be wondered at, ſince *Pleaſure*, or *Delight*, taken in it's juſt Extent, is only another Word for *Happineſs*. But it generally happens, that Men are very wrong in their Notions and Purſuits of *Pleaſure*, and in the Methods they take to obtain it: They place it in improper Objects,

jects, and *ſeek it where it is not to be found*; or they take up with low mean *Pleaſures*, which are beneath the Dignity of the rational Nature. To ſay that *Pleaſure is to be found in a Life of Piety and Virtue* is, in the Opinion of the World, a ſtrange Paradox; and yet, if the Matter be impartially conſidered, it is what right Reaſon muſt approve as a certain and important Truth. To ſet this in a proper Light is the Deſign I have been carrying on in a Series of Diſcourſes, in which I have taken a large Compaſs: And the juſt Concluſion to be drawn from the Whole may be very fitly expreſſed in theſe Words of *Solomon*, when, ſpeaking of *Wiſdom*, by which he underſtands *true Religion and Virtue*, he declareth, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

It may not be amiſs, on this Occaſion, to recollect the principal Things which have been inſiſted upon in the Proſecution of this Subject.

It hath been ſhewn, that the Objects which *Religion* propoſes to our Contemplation are the moſt ſublime and excellent, capable of filling the Soul with a pure and exalted *Pleaſure*; *Knowledge*, eſpecially, when exerciſed on Things of a great and glorious Nature, affords a noble and rational Entertainment,

tainment, far ſuperior to the Pleaſures of Senſe. And, of all *Knowledge*, that which *true Religion* furniſheth us with is both of the greateſt Dignity in itſelf, and of the greateſt Uſe and Importance to us. We are thereby brought to an Acquaintance with the nobleſt Objects which can poſſibly be preſented to the human Mind. It leadeth us to the *Knowledge* and *Contemplation* of God himſelf, and his incomparable Attributes and Perfections: It directs us to obſerve and admire the Characters of his *Glory* in his wonderful Works of Creation, and in the Methods of his moſt wiſe, benign, and righteous Providence: To which it muſt be added, that it diſcloſeth to us *a moſt glorious and raviſhing Scene in the Redemption of Mankind by* Jeſus Chriſt, in which the Wiſdom and Holineſs, as well as Grace and Goodneſs of God, is moſt illuſtriouſly diſplayed. Theſe Things, when duly realiſed to the Mind, have a manifeſt Tendency to fill it with a devout *Admiration, Love, and Joy*. What a Source of *divine Satisfaction* is here opened to the Soul, if duly improved! And what Enemies are they to their own *Joy*, who ſeldom turn their Thoughts to thoſe *glorious and moſt intereſting* Subjects, whilſt they ſuffer their Minds to be taken up with mere Trifles and Vanities,

Vanities, or at leaſt with Things which are comparatively of ſmall Worth and Importance!

And as *Religion* leads us to the *Knowledge* of the moſt excellent Things, the Contemplation of which is delightful to a well-diſpoſed Mind; ſo the Courſe of Action which it preſcribes, and to engage us to which is the great Deſign of *religious Faith and Knowledge*, hath a Tendency, in the Nature of Things, to promote our true Perfection and Happineſs. This is what I have endeavoured to ſhew by a diſtinct Conſideration of the Duties required of us in the Divine Law, relating to *God*, our *Neighbour*, and *ourſelves*. What a noble *Satisfaction* muſt it yield to live in the habitual Exerciſe of a ſincere vital *Piety*, and to maintain a ſacred Intercourſe and Communication with God our *heavenly Father* through *Jeſus Chriſt* by a pure Adoration and Devotion, by holy Love, a profound and filial Reverence, meek Reſignation, and ſteady Dependence! To be *juſt and generouſly honeſt* in our Dealings towards our Fellow-creatures, to endeavour to *render unto all their Dues*, and to lay ourſelves out in *doing Good to Mankind*, and promoting their Happineſs by all the kind Offices in our Power! And, with Regard to the *Government of ourſelves*, to keep our Appetites and

and Paſſions within the Bounds of a juſt Moderation, to be ſober and chaſte, patient and contented, raiſed above every Thing ſordid and low, vicious and impure, and formed to a Divine and heavenly Temper! And, finally, to abound in the uniform harmonious Exerciſe of thoſe *Chriſtian* Virtues which are repreſented by the Apoſtle as *the Fruits of the Spirit*, ſuch as *Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance!* What is there in theſe Diſpoſitions, and the Acts that flow from them, but what is excellent and amiable, improving and delightful to the reaſonable Nature? They tend to procure a Man a fair and lovely Reputation and Character, which cannot but be grateful to a generous Spirit: And, which is of greater Conſequence, a holy and virtuous Temper and Conduct is attended with the Approbation of a Man's own Mind, and naturally produceth *an inward Complacency and Satisfaction*, which none can be fully ſenſible of, but the Perſon that feeleth it. It is the Obſervation of the wiſe Man, that *the good Man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.* Prov. xiv. 14. His *Satisfaction and Joy* is not principally derived from Things without him, from worldly Advantages and the Applauſe of Men: He has an *inward* Fund of Happineſs,

pineſs in his own Breaſt. The pious and virtuous Affections and Diſpoſitions of his Soul, and the good Actions he performs, are attended, in the very Exerciſe of them, with *a conſcious Satisfaction* which gladdens the Heart; and they alſo adminiſter ſolid Comfort to him upon the Reflection, as having acted in a Manner worthy of the rational Nature, and becoming the Obligations he is under. But that which is the chief Source of the *inward Satisfaction* which a good Man enjoys is the Senſe he hath of the Divine Approbation: That he is engaged in a Courſe of Action which is pleaſing to the Beſt of Beings, the trueſt Judge of Excellency, whoſe Favour and Approbation is of infinitely greater Conſequence to us than the Applauſe of a whole World: *Thou, Lord, wilt bleſs the Righteous* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *with Favour wilt thou compaſs him as with a Shield.* Pſ. v. 12.

To theſe Conſiderations it may be added, that *true Religion* ſweetens Proſperity. It both helpeth us to the proper Reliſh and Enjoyment of temporal Bleſſings, by inabling us to receive and enjoy them as the *Gifts of God* with Chearfulneſs and Innocence, and with a thankful Senſe of the Divine Goodneſs; and it directeth and aſſiſteth us to make a right Uſe and Improvement

ment of them. And, on the other Hand, it furniſheth the moſt effectual Conſolations and Supports under the Troubles and Adverſities to which we are now expoſed, and thus lays a Foundation for Happineſs, as far as it is attainable here on Earth, in every Condition and Circumſtance of Life.

The laſt Thing, which was obſerved, was, that *Religion* raiſeth us to the moſt ſublime and glorious *Hopes:* It opens the moſt raviſhing and bliſsful Proſpects, which tend to ſpread a ſacred *Joy and Satisfaction* through all our Powers. And in this the Condition of a truly pious and virtuous Perſon is vaſtly preferable to that of the moſt proſperous wicked Man upon Earth: His Views are not confined within the narrow Limits of this preſent State, but extend even to *Eternity:* He can upon ſolid Grounds *rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God.* In Proportion as this *Hope* prevaileth, he hath *Heaven* brought down to him in ſome happy *Beginnings* here on Earth: And, when he is called to reſign this mortal Life, his *Hope is full of Immortality*, and he can carry his Views beyond *the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death* to a World of *everlaſting Light and Joy.*

The ſeveral Things, which have been mentioned, taken together, may be ſufficient

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to ſatisfy every impartial thinking Mind, that it is not without great Reaſon that it is pronounced concerning *Divine Wiſdom*, or *true practical Religion*, that *her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs, and all her Paths are Peace.*

But to all this it may be objected, that the Practice of Piety and Virtue, however pleaſing and beautiful in Idea, is in Fact *unpleaſant* and *diſagreeable* to the greateſt Part of Mankind: That many of the Duties required in the Divine Law, ſuch as *Self-denial, and the Mortification of our Appetites and Paſſions*, are inconſiſtent with *Pleaſure* and deſtructive of it. That *Repentance*, which is the firſt neceſſary Step to a religious Life, often cauſeth bitter Pangs and Sorrow. And not only is the *Chriſtian* Life *difficult* in the firſt Entrance upon it, but it is all along *uneaſy and troubleſome*: It requireth a conſtant Watchfulneſs, and a ſtrict Diſcipline to be exerciſed over the Heart and the Affections. It is repreſented in Scripture under the Notion of *a Race*, which is a very laborious Exerciſe; and of *a Warfare*, in which we are to carry on *a continual Conflict* againſt our ſpiritual Enemies, and againſt the Temptations of the Fleſh and of the World. Add to all this, that many Perſons, whom it were the Height of Uncha-

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ritableneſs not to think ſincerely religious, have ſpent their Days in *Sorrow and Sadneſs*, filled with diſconſolate Jealouſies and Fears, which have *marred* all the *Pleaſures* of Life.

Such as theſe are the Prejudices which frequently create in Men's Minds an Averſion to *Religion*, and diſcourage them from embracing it. But it is no hard Matter to ſhew, that, notwithſtanding all this, the Obſervation ſtill holdeth good, that *the Ways of true Religion are Ways of Pleaſantneſs*, and that a virtuous and godly Life, even in this preſent State, and with *all the Inconveniencies and Troubles* that may attend it, is vaſtly ſuperior to a Life of Sin and Vice, in the *real Satisfaction and Pleaſure* which it yields.

More particularly to take off the Force of theſe Objections, I would offer the following Things to be conſidered.

Firſt, *The Difficulty and Trouble*, which attendeth the Practice of *Religion*, doth not ariſe from *Religion* itſelf, or any Thing in it's own Nature that is *harſh and diſagreeable*; but it is wholly owing to the Indiſpoſedneſs and Corruption of Men's own Hearts. It is no juſt Objection againſt *Religion and Virtue*, that thoſe who are under the Power of vicious Habits and irregular Appetites find

no Pleaſure in the Practice of it: For in this Caſe the Fault is not to be charged upon *Religion*, but upon the Depravedneſs of their own Taſte and Inclinations. The moſt beautiful Colours cannot charm the Eye, when it is covered with Film, or obſtructed with Rheum. Food may be *very pleaſant* to the Taſte, though a vitiated Palate cannot reliſh it: Nor is Religion the leſs divine and excellent in itſelf, becauſe it gives *no Pleaſure* to an impure and unholy Soul. The juſt Concluſion to be drawn from this is, not that *a Life of true Piety and Virtue* is not, in itſelf, *pleaſant and delightful*, but that, in order to our having a juſt Reliſh of it's Divine *Pleaſures and Satisfactions*, we muſt labour to get our *Hearts purified*, and a happy Change wrought in the Temper of our Minds. And we have great Encouragement to attempt it; For Virtue and Holineſs is ſuited to the original Diſpoſition and Conſtitution of the human Mind, when it is not perverted and depraved by ſenſual and vicious Affections and evil Habits. It was obſerved, in entering upon this Subject, that, as we are reaſonable Creatures, moral Agents, there are Means to be uſed for rectifying and improving our moral Senſe and Taſte of Things: In order to which, we ſhould often conſider the Beauty and Excellency of

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real Holineſs and Virtue, the Goodneſs and Reaſonableneſs of the Divine Commands, and the Tendency they have to promote the true Happineſs and Perfection of our Nature: And what hath been largely offered in the foregoing Diſcourſes may furniſh uſeful Reflections to this Purpoſe. Frequently to turn our Thoughts and Views this Way hath a natural Tendency to remove our Prejudices, and bring us to an inward Conviction and Senſation of the *Pleaſantneſs of the Ways of Religion*, as being agreeable to the beſt and nobleſt Principles of the human Frame. And as we muſt exert our utmoſt Endeavours in the Exerciſe of our own rational and moral Powers, and in the Uſe of all proper Means of Self-improvement; ſo we muſt, from a Senſe of our Weakneſs and Inſufficiency in ourſelves, apply to God by humble and fervent Prayer for the Influences of his Holy Spirit; that he would be graciouſly pleaſed to *create in us clean Hearts, and renew right Spirits within us*; that he would inable us to *diſcern the Things which are excellent*, and heal the Diſaffection of *the carnal Mind* in us; and that he would form us to ſuch a Divine Temper and Diſpoſition of Soul, that we may be fitted for *Delighting in Holineſs and Virtue*, and may feel the Power

of it's ſacred Charms. And there is great Reaſon to hope, that God will have a gracious Regard to theſe our humble Requeſts, when attended with diligent Endeavours on our Parts: Nothing can be more encouraging to this Purpoſe, than that remarkable Declaration of our bleſſed Saviour: *If ye, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto your Children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that aſk him?* Luke xi. 13.

But, Secondly, Let it be farther obſerved, that even thoſe Duties, which ſeem *moſt difficult* in *Religion*, and to which we are apt to have the greateſt Averſion, are, if rightly underſtood, not only highly rational, but lay a Foundation for *the trueſt Pleaſure and Satisfaction of Mind.* Such particularly is the *Mortification of our corrupt Appetites and Paſſions*, the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of which, to our own Happineſs, I had Occaſion to take Notice of before. It muſt indeed be acknowledged to be a *difficult* Work: But we often repreſent the *Difficulty* to ourſelves much greater than it really is, as if it were in vain to ſtruggle againſt inveterate evil Habits. When we heartily ſet about it, we ſhall find that the *Difficulty* is far from being

ing insuperable, especially considering that there are gracious Assistances provided, which God hath been pleased to promise for our Encouragement, and which he is ever ready to communicate for helping our sincere Endeavours, and carrying us on in the Performance of our Duty amidst the many *Difficulties and Temptations* which now lie in our Way.

Whatever Pains it may cost us to correct and subdue evil Habits, it may be truly said, that the Man who setteth himself to *mortify his vicious Lusts* hath more of a real and rational Self-enjoyment, than he that indulgeth and gratifieth them: For he only controuleth the *Flesh*, his more base and brutish Part, in order to exalt the nobler Part of his Nature; by *denying* his own *corrupt Self-will*, he throws himself into the Bosom of the supreme Good, in whom he may *securely and delightfully* acquiesce. How *uneasy and disagreeable* soever the Work of *Repentance*, and the *Sorrow* which accompanies it, may appear to be (though that *Sorrow* is not properly chargeable on *Religion*, but upon our own *evil Ways*, the natural Effect of which, when duly reflected upon, is *Sorrow and Remorse*) yet certain it is that *the Repenting of and Forsaking our Sins* afford-

eth more of a ſolid and noble *Satisfaction*, than a *preſumptuous* Perſiſting in them. An ingenuous *Contrition* has a Kind of *pleaſing* Senſation attending it, *whereby the Heart is made better*, and which is far preferable to the Exceſſes of carnal Jollitry. The Soul by *Repentance* diſburthens itſelf of it's Load of Guilt, and is reſtored to a right Temper: It *returneth from the Ways of Sin and Folly to the Father of Mercies and God of Love*, and endeavoureth to unite itſelf to the infinite Good, which muſt needs lay the Foundation for an inward Tranquillity and ſerene Temper of Mind.

Add to this, Thirdly, That *the chief Difficulty* in breaking off from our evil Courſes, and applying ourſelves in good Earneſt to the Practice of Piety and Virtue, is at the Beginning; and, in Proportion to the Advances we make in it, the *eaſier* and *pleaſanter* it will grow. It is an old and good Rule verified by Obſervation and Experience, *Chuſe that which is beſt, and Uſe will make it pleaſant*. When true Religion and Virtue is become habitual, which it will be by frequent Exerciſe; and holy good Affections and Diſpoſitions are ſtrengthened and improved; we ſhall be fitted for reliſhing more of the *Pleaſures* of a holy and virtuous Life. And though there

there will be a conſtant Care and Vigilance neceſſary, whilſt we are in the Body; and *a Conflict* muſt be carried on againſt the Remainders of Corruption within us, and againſt the Temptations and Aſſaults of our ſpiritual Enemies; yet a ſteady Perſeverance and Proficiency in the Ways of Holineſs will ordinarily be attended with *a growing Satisfaction*. And, if we be called to undergo extraordinary Trials, as in Time of Perſecution, when we may be obliged to abandon our worldly Poſſeſſions and Enjoyments, and even to *lay down our Lives for the Sake of Truth and a good Conſcience*, we may upon juſt Grounds expect extraordinary Aſſiſtances and Supports. Such outward Evils and Sufferings for the *Cauſe of Religion and Righteouſneſs*, which is the *Cauſe of God*, ſhall be abundantly compenſated by the *peaceful* Reflections of our own Minds, by *the Joys of the Holy Ghoſt*, and by the *Hope* of that eminent Degree of *Glory and Felicity in the heavenly World*, which is prepared for all thoſe who give this remarkable Proof of the Sincerity and Prevalency of their Faith, their Love, and Obedience.

As to the Objection drawn from the *ſad and uncomfortable Lives* of many ſeemingly

pious Perſons, it is certain, that this is not properly owing to *Religion itſelf*, but generally to Faults or Miſtakes in thoſe that profeſs it: Either it is owing to their not conſidering with a due Attention of Mind the *glorious* and *delightful* Objects which are ſet before us in the Goſpel; or to their being too much under the Power of a worldly Frame and Spirit, which both indiſpoſeth them for reliſhing *the Joys of Religion*, and ſubjecteth them to many Anxieties and Vexations; or it is to be aſcribed to their Negligence in the Duties required of them, and to their not having been ſo uniform and circumſpect in their *Chriſtian* Courſe, as they might and ought to have been; which may provoke God, in juſt Diſpleaſure, to *with-hold from them the Light of his Countenance, and the Conſolations of his Spirit*; and in all theſe Caſes, if they do not experience much of *the Comforts of Religion*, it is to be charged upon their not walking according to it's ſacred Rules: Or, perhaps, they are of a melancholy Diſpoſition, which caſteth a black and diſmal Hue upon every Thing: And ſhall *Religion* be blamed for that which is the Effect of bodily Conſtitution, or the Power of Diſeaſe? Or their Fears and Jealouſies may be owing to miſtaken

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Notions of *Religion*, and to Miſapprehenſions of the Nature and gracious Terms of *the Goſpel Covenant*: And the proper Remedy is, not to caſt off Religion and the Practice of it, which would make the Caſe infinitely worſe; but to get our Conſciences rightly informed as to the Terms of our Acceptance with God, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace towards us through *Jeſus Chriſt*; and at the ſame Time to be diligent and circumſpect in a Life of holy Obedience. Nothing truly valuable can be obtained without Application and Diligence. A glorious Prize is ſet before us, conſummate Virtue and Happineſs; the Proſpect of which, though attended with *Difficulty*, hath a Tendency to carry us on with *Chearfulneſs* in the Way of our Duty, and to *ſweeten* all our Labours and Services; and, when this State of Trial and Temptation is over, and we are freed from all the Troubles and Infirmities of this mortal Life, *perfect Holineſs* will be *perfect eternal Joy and Glory*.

Thus we have endeavoured to obviate and remove the Prejudices which many are apt to entertain againſt *a godly and virtuous Life*, as if it were inconſiſtent with *true Pleaſure and Enjoyment*. It appears that there is no juſt Foundation for thoſe Prejudices;

Prejudices; and that it highly concerneth us to apply ourſelves in good Earneſt to the Practice of Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs, if we would ſhew that we have a proper and conſiſtent Regard to the Securing and Promoting our real Happineſs here and hereafter.

Prejudices againſt Religion removed, and the Practice of Piety and Virtue recommended, as the higheſt Pleaſure and Delight.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

PROVERBS iii. 17.

Her Ways are Ways of Pleaſantneſs and all her Paths are Peace.

OUR Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, who hath inſtructed us to form the juſteſt Notions of *Religion*, hath obſerved that *ſtrait is the Gate and narrow is the Way that leadeth unto Life, and few there be that find it.* Matt. vii. 14. This may, at firſt View, ſeem not to be very conſiſtent with what the wiſe Man here declares, that *the Ways of Wiſdom*, by which he underſtands *true Religion and Virtue, are Ways of Pleaſantneſs*: But if the Matter be rightly conſidered,

conſidered, it will appear that there is a perfect Harmony between them. When the wiſe Man ſpeaks of *the Pleaſantneſs of the Ways of Religion*, or of *a Life of Virtue and Holineſs*, he doth not intend to ſignify that it hath *no Trouble or Difficulty* attending it, but that, notwithſtanding this, it hath a Tendency to make us *happy*, as far as *Happineſs* is attainable here on Earth, and brings the *trueſt Pleaſure and Satisfaction* along with it. And, on the other Hand, when our Saviour ſpeaks of *the Way of Piety and Virtue as ſtrait and narrow*, his Deſign is only to repreſent *the Difficulties and Diſcouragements* attending it in the preſent corrupt State of Mankind, and the vicious Prejudices in the Hearts of Sinners which are apt to render them averſe to the Practice of it: But it is by no Means his Intention to deny *the real Satisfaction and Comfort* which is to be found in a holy and virtuous Courſe, and which is vaſtly preferable to *the vain and unſatisfying Pleaſures* of Vice and Sin. He begins his admirable *Sermon on the Mount*, in which he hath given the moſt excellent Precepts and Directions for a holy Life, and hath carried *pure Religion and Virtue* to the nobleſt Height, with pronouncing thoſe to be *bleſſed* or *happy* Perſons who con-

conduct themſelves by it's ſacred Rules: He particularly mentions *the Poor in Spirit*, i. e. *the Humble*, and thoſe who have their Hearts weaned from the Love of worldly Riches; *them that mourn* viz. *after a godly Sort*; *the Meek*, *the Merciful*, *the Peace-makers*, *thoſe that hunger and thirſt after Righteouſneſs*, *the Pure in Heart*, *and them that are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs Sake*. The World may look upon ſuch Perſons to be *unhappy*; but he exhorts them *to rejoice and be exceeding glad*, even when expoſed to the moſt grievous Sufferings and Reproaches for his Name's Sake: And, if *Religion* can furniſh Matter of *Joy* even under ſuch *ſevere Trials*, we may juſtly conclude, that a Life ſpent under it's Influence is really productive of the *trueſt Satisfaction and Delight*.

It appears, then, that, notwithſtanding all the *Difficulties* good Men may meet with in a religious and virtuous Courſe, and on the Account of which our Saviour repreſents *the Way to Life as ſtrait and narrow*, yet to thoſe whoſe Taſte is not vitiated, and who are capable of *diſcerning the Things that are excellent*, the Practice of *Religion and Righteouſneſs* is fitted to yield the moſt ſincere and ſolid *Satisfaction* and rational *Delight*.

If

If we ſhould purſue the Inquiry after *Pleaſure* as *Job* doth after *Wiſdom*, *Where ſhall Pleaſure be found, and where is the Place of Joy and Happineſs?* Is it to be found in a large Affluence of wordly Riches, or in the Splendor of Titles and Dignities, and the noiſy Pomp of the Ambitious? Or ſhall we look for it in riotous Exceſſes, in the Gratifications of the voluptuous Senſualiſt, or in the impious Jeſts and Mirth of the Profane? Reaſon and the Experience of all Ages ſhew that theſe Things are incapable of yielding *a true and laſting Satisfaction*, and that no Perſons are uſually farther from *Happineſs and real Self-enjoyment* than they who look for *Pleaſure* in ſuch Things as theſe. As it is ſaid concerning *Wiſdom*; *The Fear of the Lord, that is Wiſdom; and to depart from Evil is Underſtanding*. Job xxviii. 28. So it may, with equal Juſtice and Propriety, be ſaid, that *to love and ſerve God is Pleaſure, and to depart from Vice, and to go on in the Paths of Religion and Virtue, is true Happineſs*. God is the proper Source of *Happineſs* to reaſonable Beings. From him it originally flows, and on him it intirely depends: And therefore *the nobleſt Pleaſure* is to be found in *Religion*, which is the Knowledge, the Love, and Obedience

ence of God, and leads to *the Enjoyment* of him. The moſt powerful Allurement to *Vice*, that by which it charms and captivates *the Children of Men*, is *the Pleaſure* which it promiſes: But in this *true Piety and Virtue* is infinitely ſuperior. *The Pleaſures of Vice and Sin* are little more than imaginary, or at leaſt are mightily heightened by vain Opinion and the Warmth of Fancy: Thoſe of *Religion* are real and ſincere, ſolid and ſubſtantial; they approve themſelves to cool Reaſon, and improve upon the Reflection. *The Pleaſures of Sin* are low and ſenſual, ſuited only to the inferior Part of our Nature: Thoſe of *Religion* are rational and ſublime, approaching to *the Joys* of Angels, and to *the Happineſs* of God himſelf. *The Pleaſures of Sin* are fleeting and tranſitory; they are *but for a Seaſon*. Heb. xi. 25. Thoſe *of Piety and Virtue* are ſtable and permanent. The former are only derived from without, and are therefore uncertain and precarious; the other have their Seat in the Heart and Conſcience, and do not depend on the Smiles or Frowns of a flattering or malignant World. Finally, *the Pleaſures of Vice and Sin* are ſucceeded by *Diſappointment*, and end in *Bitterneſs*, often in this World, and moſt certain-

certainly in the next. *Unhappy Pleaſures* theſe which lead to *eternal Miſery and Anguiſh!* But *the Pleaſures of a religious Life* on Earth are the Forerunners of *immortal Joy*, the happy Pledges and Earneſts of thoſe *pure and ſatisfying Pleaſures which are at God's right Hand for evermore.*

And now the proper Uſe and Improvement which ſhould be made of all that hath been offered on this Subject is, that, as we deſire *true Happineſs and Delight*, we ſhould come to God for it, and ſeek it in the Way which he hath preſcribed. Let us ſeek it in the Meditations of his Glory, in a Senſe of his Love and Favour, in Obedience to his Laws, and in an Imitation of his amiable moral Perfections; or, in other Words, let us ſeek it in *the Ways of Holineſs and Virtue.* For the moſt Part, Men need not many Arguments to induce them to ſeek after *Pleaſure*: And why ſhould they be ſo hard to be perſuaded, when called to *the nobleſt Joys?* Here *the moſt pure and laſting Pleaſures* are ſet before us, to which God himſelf, the merciful Father of our Beings, condeſcendeth to invite us. He ſeeth and pitieth his *unhappy* Creatures that are wearying themſelves in Purſuing after *lying Vanities* and *falſe deceitful Pleaſures*, and, in Compaſſion to their

their Souls, warneth them not to ſeek for *Satisfaction where it is not to be found*, and ſheweth them the only Way to *true Happineſs*. It is his Language, *Wherefore do ye ſpend your Money for that which is not Bread, and your Labour for that which ſatisfieth not? Hearken unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight itſelf in Fatneſs. Incline your Ear and come unto me; hear, and your Soul ſhall live; and I will make an everlaſting Covenant with you.* Iſ. lv. 2, 3. He doth not forbid us to ſeek after *Pleaſure*, but is for turning our Views and Purſuits, from the brutiſh deſtructive *Pleaſures* of Vice and Sin, to the noble and ſatisfying *Delights* of Religion and Holineſs.

If therefore there be any of us that have hitherto been *alienated from God*, and from his Love and Service, and have ſought for *Pleaſure and Happineſs* in the Vanities of this inſnaring World, and in the Gratifications of vicious Appetite, let us immediately ſet ourſelves to abandon thoſe evil Courſes in which we have been engaged. Let us humble ourſelves deeply before God, for having acted a Part ſo contrary to our Reaſon, ſo inconſiſtent with our Duty and our *true Happineſs*, and ſo unbecoming our *Chriſtian* Profeſſion, and

the glorious Hopes we are raiſed unto by the Goſpel. Aſhamed and grieved for our paſt Sins and Follies, let us earneſtly implore his pardoning Mercy, and return to him by *a ſincere Repentance and a true and living Faith* From a Senſe of the Excellency of the Divine Laws, and a hearty Approbation of the moſt reaſonable and gracious Terms of the Goſpel-Covenant, let us yield up ourſelves wholly to God, our heavenly Father, our ſupreme Lord and chief Good, through *Jeſus Chriſt*, the great appointed *Mediator and Saviour*, reſolving to endeavour to *walk before him unto all Well-pleaſing*, and in him to place our *chief Happineſs and Delight*. That is excellent Advice which *Eliphaz* gives to *Job: Acquaint now thyſelf with him, and be at Peace; thereby Good ſhall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the Law from his Mouth, and lay up his Words in thine Heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou ſhalt be built up, thou ſhalt put away Iniquity far from thy Tabernacles.—Then ſhalt thou have thy Delight in the Almighty, and ſhalt lift up thy Face unto God.* Job xxii. 21, 22, 23, 26. Let it therefore be the ſincere Language of our Hearts, " Adieu, ye *deceitful Pleaſures of Sin, the* " *Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, ana*

" *the*

" *the Pride of Life!* I will no longer ſeek " for *Happineſs* in you, nor prize your *low* " *evanid Joys*. Let *Religion* take me un- " der it's bleſſed Conduct: Here will I " ſeek for *Pleaſure*, and *the conſcious Sa-* " *tisfactions* of a well-diſpoſed Mind. " *To whom, gracious God, ſhould I go but* " *unto thee*, in whom alone I can be *hap-* " *py?* I have long ſought to *hew out unto* " *myſelf Ciſterns, broken Ciſterns, that can* " *hold no Water*; but it is now the De- " ſire of my Soul to return unto thee, " *the only Fountain of living Water*, the " eternal indeficient Source of *Felicity and* " *Joy*; and to ſeek for *Happineſs* in thy " Favour and Love, and in *the Ways of* " *Righteouſneſs* which thou haſt preſcri- " bed."

I would particularly addreſs myſelf, on this Occaſion, to young Perſons, who, through the Warmth of their Paſſions, their Want of Experience, and the Inſinuations of evil Company, are apt to be decoyed, under the Notion of *Pleaſure*, into vicious Gratifications, or at leaſt into a continual Succeſſion of vain Amuſements, to the Neglect of every Thing that is ſerious; as if the Applying themſelves to the Work of *Religion* were *too ſevere and dull* a Thing for their Age. Con-

ſider, I beſeech you, the Account which has been given of the Nature and Excellency of the Divine Commands; and then judge what there is in the Obſervance of them that is inconſiſtent with *true Pleaſure*. Is there any Thing that really deſerves that Name which *Religion* depriveth us of? It abridgeth us of *no Enjoyments* which are within the Bounds of Temperance and Innocence: And ſhall nothing be called *Pleaſure*, but what is Irregularity and Exceſs? The Man of Religion and Virtue hath *the trueſt Enjoyment* of himſelf and of his Friend, as well as of his God; and therefore hath the moſt juſt Foundation for *Chearfulneſs and Complacency of Mind*. But thoſe have particular Advantages this Way who apply themſelves to the Practice of Virtue and Holineſs *in the Days of their Youth*: This is comparatively *much eaſier* to them, than it is to Perſons who have been much hardened by a long Courſe of Sinning, and who are under the Power of inveterate evil Habits, which it requireth great Pains and Trouble to mortify and ſubdue. They that devote their early Bloom, the Pride of their Years and Strength, to God and his Service, ſeem to be particularly qualified for Reliſhing the *Divine*

Joys

Joys of *Religion*, and have juſt Grounds to hope that *God will lift up the Light of his Countenance upon them*. Till we apply ourſelves in good Earneſt to real Piety and Virtue, we cannot properly be ſaid to anſwer the End of our Being, or to *begin to be happy*; and ſurely we cannot *begin to be happy* too ſoon. This will be the beſt Preparative for all the Events which may befall us in this State of Trial and Diſcipline: It will lay the ſureſt Foundation for a *comfortable and uſeful* Life, a *peaceful Death*, and a *happy* Eternity.

To conclude, let thoſe who have given themſelves up to God in Sincerity, and who endeavour to approve themſelves to him in *a Life of holy Obedience*, ſhew that they *take Pleaſure in the Ways of Religion*, by performing the Duties of it with *a willing and chearful Mind*. Such Perſons have a Right to *rejoice*, and it is their Duty to do ſo: God, who *delighteth in the Happineſs* of his Creatures, is then beſt pleaſed, when they *ſerve him with Joy and Gladneſs of Heart*. It was his Command under the Old Teſtament, *Thou ſhalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, in all that thou putteſt thine Hand unto*. Deut. xii. 18. And again, *Thou ſhalt rejoice in every good Thing which the Lord thy God giveth unto thee*. Deut. xxvi. 11. And ſurely

then this is juſtly expected of us under the New Teſtament Diſpenſation, which is fuller of *Conſolation*, and hath leſs of *Rigour* in it, than the Old. It is expreſly urged upon *Chriſtians* that *they ſhould rejoice evermore*. 1 Theſſ. v. 16. *Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I ſay, Rejoice*. Phil. iv. 4. *The Kingdom of God*, which it is the Deſign of the Goſpel to erect in the Souls of Men, is deſcribed by this Character, that it is *Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*. Rom. xiv. 17.

We ſhould therefore regard it, not only as our Privilege, but as an important Part of our Duty to *rejoice*: And great would be the Advantages that would reſult from it. This would put Life and Vigour into all our Services, and would engage us to perſevere in a religious and virtuous Practice with an *unfainting* Conſtancy and Diligence. It is hard to continue in a Courſe which we find *no Pleaſure* in, eſpecially if ſtrong Temptations or Perſecutions ariſe: But, when we know and feel what a *delightful* Thing *true Godlineſs* is; what *Joys* are to be found in God, in Loving, Serving, and Obeying him; this will contribute to keep us ſteady and uniform, and will prevent our *Backſliding* and Growing *weary in Well-doing*: The Reliſh we have

for

for thoſe higher and purer *Delights* will raiſe us above the low and deceitful *Pleaſures* of Sin and this vain World.

But then it highly concerneth us to guard againſt every Thing which hath a Tendency to damp or interrupt thoſe *ſacred Joys*: Eſpecially we muſt be careful not to indulge any darling Luſt in our Boſoms, nor allow ourſelves in the Practice of any one known preſumptuous Sin. We muſt endeavour to *abound in the Fruits of Righteouſneſs* and to make a continual Progreſs in the Virtues of the *Chriſtian* Life, and muſt frequently turn our Thoughts and Attention to thoſe *glorious and delightful* Objects which Religion ſetteth before us; and this we ſhould do, not only for our own Sakes but for that of others too. The ſprightly vigorous *Chriſtian*, who, by *the Delight* he findeth in God, and in the Ways of Righteouſneſs, is rendered *chearful and agreeable* in his whole Deportment, is an Ornament to his Profeſſion, and maketh a lovely Repreſentation of *Religion* to all that behold him: And, on the other Hand, for a *Chriſtian* to wear a dull and gloomy Aſpect, always ſighing and complaining, would be a Kind of Contradiction to his Hopes and Profeſſions. Some that have been *truly religious*, and others

who had a Mind to appear ſo, whilſt they ſhunned an indecent Levity, have, by their ſad Aſpects and imprudent Severities, brought a Reproach upon *the Ways of Godlineſs*: But certainly there is nothing in *Religion* itſelf, duly conſidered, which can give Countenance to ſuch a Conduct. A good Man hath undoubtedly the moſt juſt Foundation for an *inward Joy and Satisfaction of Mind*: And why ſhould not this brighten up his Aſpect, and diffuſe *an innocent Chearfulneſs* through his whole Converſation?

Finally, let us often look forwards to that *Fulneſs of Joy*, which God hath in his rich Grace and Mercy prepared for good Men *in the heavenly World*, and to which *a Life of true Religion* here on Earth is deſigned to be preparatory. What *comfortable* Lives ſhould we lead, if we frequently raiſed our Views in the Meditations of Faith to that *Mount* Sion *which is above, the City of the living God; and to an innumerable Company of Angels, to the general Aſſembly and Church of the Firſt-born, which are written in Heaven; to God the Judge of all, and the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, and to* Jeſus *the Mediator of the New Covenant*. Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24. To conſider that *the Life of holy Obedience*,

to which we are obliged in this State of Trial, will deliver up to us *a Life of immortal Glory in the higheſt Heavens!* Oh tranſporting Thought! What *Joy*, what *Triumph*, muſt this needs diffuſe through the believing Soul! And, if *the Hope of Heaven* be ſo delightful, what ſhall *the actual Enjoyment* be! Now our Knowledge and Love of God, and our Conformity to him, is imperfect, and therefore our *Delight* in him is imperfect too: But *Heaven*, which is a State of *perfect Holineſs*, is alſo a State of *conſummate Happineſs and Enjoyment*. As there we ſhall be admitted to the immediate beatific Viſion of the Deity, and ſhall have the fulleſt Exhibitions and Communications of his Love; ſo we ſhall *delight* in him in a far fuller and nobler Senſe than now we are capable of doing. Our *Joy in God* ſhall then be *complete*, and we ſhall be *perfectly ſatisfied with his Likeneſs*, and ſo ſhall continue to Eternity. Let the Proſpects of this refreſh and animate us: Let us *rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God*. And do thou, Lord, ſo aſſiſt us by thy Grace and Spirit, that we may be *made meet* for that glorious World, where we ſhall be *for ever with thee*, and ſhall be *happy* in thy bliſsful Preſence and Love *to all Eternity*.

On the Credibility and Proofs of the Goſpel-Records.

DISCOURSE XIX.

JOHN XX. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jeſus *in the Preſence of his Diſciples, which are not written in this Book. But theſe are written, that ye might believe that* Jeſus *is the* Chriſt, *the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.*

WHOSOEVER ſeriouſly conſidereth the Excellency of our Saviour's Doctrines and Diſcourſes, the admirable Purity of the Morals which he taught, and the Laws which he delivered, and the Tendency of the Whole to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of Mankind; and at the ſame Time conſidereth the Beauty and

and Perfection of his Example and the Virtues that ſo eminently ſhine forth in his holy and ſpotleſs Life and Character, together with the many *extraordinary* Atteſtations given him *from Heaven*; *the ſtupendous Miracles* wrought by himſelf in Perſon, and by thoſe whom he commiſſioned and impowered to work them *in his Name*; but, above all, *his Reſurrection from the Dead, and Aſcenſion into Heaven*: I ſay, any one, that alloweth himſelf ſeriouſly to conſider all this, will be apt to acknowledge that, ſuppoſing theſe Things to be certainly true, and that the Accounts which are given us of them may be depended upon, they form ſo ſtrong a Proof of the Truth and Divinity of *our Saviour's Miſſion* as is ſufficient to ſatisfy any unprejudiced and well-diſpoſed Mind. But what Reaſon have we to believe that theſe Things are true? We were not *Eye or Ear Witneſſes* of them; and how is it poſſible we ſhould, who live at the Diſtance of many Ages from the Time in which thoſe Diſcourſes were delivered, and thoſe *extraordinary* Facts were done? But muſt we for that Reaſon think they are Things in which we have no Concern, and that we can have no Aſſurance of the Truth and Certainty of thoſe Things ſufficient to ſatisfy our Minds? This would be a very

wrong

wrong Concluſion, except it were laid down as a Principle, that we are not to believe any Thing, but what *we ourſelves ſee with our own Eyes:* A Principle ſo abſurd that no Man of Senſe will ſeriouſly maintain it, and from which numberleſs Abſurdities would follow. If this were once generally admitted, no Societies could ſubſiſt, a Stop would be put to all judicial Proceedings, no Witneſſes could be depended upon in any Caſe, there would be an End of all Credit and mutual Intercourſe among Men, and almoſt of all our Knowledge and Means of Improvement; we could have no Advantage from the Obſervations of others, or from the Hiſtory and Experience of former Ages and other Countries, or of our own Age or Country, in any Caſe where *we ourſelves were not actually preſent:* In a Word, it would, in it's Conſequences, introduce an univerſal Confuſion, Ignorance, and Barbariſm. Nothing can be more evident, than that the Author of our Beings hath ſo formed our Natures, and hath placed us in ſuch Circumſtances in the World, that we are under a Neceſſity of admitting *the Teſtimony of others* in numberleſs Inſtances: And it would not have been ſo ordered, if this were not an Evidence that is in many Caſes ſufficient, and ſafely to be relied upon. And indeed it cannot

cannot be denied, that there are many Things, that we receive only *by the Teſtimony of others*, which yet we may be as ſure of as if they came to us confirmed *by the immediate Evidence of our own Senſes*. Will any Man ſay, that he cannot be certain there is ſuch a City as *Paris*, or ſuch a Country as *America*, becauſe he was never there? He that ſhould ſeriouſly affirm this would be thought to have an Head ſo oddly turned, that few of them would look upon him to be right in his Senſes, or fit to be argued with. The ſame may be ſaid, as to many Facts done in diſtant Places, which may come to us ſo well atteſted, and confirmed with ſuch Circumſtances, that we can no more reaſonably doubt that ſuch Actions were done, than if *we ourſelves had been preſent:* And, if any Man ſhould affect not to believe them, and give no other Reaſon for it, but that *he himſelf did not ſee them done*, inſtead of being admired as a Perſon of exact Judgment, and who was careful not to be impoſed upon, he would only expoſe himſelf to juſt Contempt, as unreaſonably ſtanding out againſt clear Evidence. The like Obſervation holdeth, with Reſpect to Things that were done in paſt Ages. A Man could not more effectually expoſe himſelf than by pretending to lay it down as a Rule,

Rule, that he will believe nothing that happened in any Age or Time before that in which he himſelf liveth: For it is manifeſt, that in many Caſes we have as convincing an Aſſurance of Facts that were done before we were born, as of any Facts whatſoever that were done in our own Time; and can no more reaſonably doubt of them, than if *we ſaw them with our own Eyes*; of which many Inſtances might eaſily be given, if it were neceſſary. And this holdeth not only with Regard to Things that were done in the Age immediately preceding, but alſo with Regard to Facts done at a greater Diſtance of Time from us, and even ſeveral ago. We muſt not imagine that the Evidence we have of the Certainty of paſt Facts always diminiſheth, in Proportion to the Diſtance of Time from us in which they were done. This dependeth upon other Circumſtances; for Things done ſeveral Ages ago may be tranſmitted to us in ſuch a Manner, and with ſuch a Degree of Evidence, as to leave no Room for reaſonable Doubt concerning them; and, on the other Hand, we may be very uncertain as to Things ſaid to be done in the former, or in the preſent Age, for Want of having them confirmed to us by proper Evidence.

Upon

Upon the Whole, it is manifeſt that our not having lived in the Age or Country in which Things were done is no juſt Argument to prove, that therefore we cannot be ſure they were done, or to make it reaſonable for us to doubt whether they were done. Muſt we then lightly give Credit to every Thing that is reported to have been done in former Ages, or other Countries? This would argue a fooliſh Credulity, and would be equally abſurd and void of Reaſon, as to believe nothing at all of what was done in former Times. What remaineth therefore is, that we muſt carefully conſider and examine the Nature of the Evidence, and the Conveyance by which Things are tranſmitted to us, that we may be able to form a proper Judgment concerning them.

There are two Ways by which the Knowledge of paſt Facts, Doctrines, or Laws, may be tranſmitted to ſucceeding Ages: The one is by *oral Tradition*, or verbal Relations and Reports, conveyed from Age to Age; the other is by *written Accounts* or *Records*: And each of theſe may be attended with collateral Circumſtances, that may heighten or diminiſh the Evidence ariſing from them. As to the former of theſe, *viz. oral Tradition*, it muſt be acknowledged not to be ſo certain a Way of Conveyance. Indeed ſome main

main Facts may be thus conveyed with a conſiderable Degree of Certainty; but the Circumſtances of Facts, and eſpecially Doctrines and Laws, can ſcarce be conveyed this Way in ſuch a Manner as may be depended upon. This was the only Way of conveying them, in the earlieſt Ages before the Flood; and, when the Life of Man was generally very much longer than now it is, Things might be thus conveyed with ſome Degree of Probability; but now, by the Experience of all Mankind, it is ſubject to many Uncertainties. When the Preſerving the Remembrance of Things, and eſpecially of Doctrines and Diſcourſes, is left merely to *oral Tradition*, there is great Danger of their being in Proceſs of Time quite loſt, or at leaſt very much varied from what they originally were.

The ſafeſt Way of tranſmitting paſt Facts, but eſpecially Doctrines and Laws, and the Circumſtances of Facts, is *by Writing*. It is thus that authentic Hiſtories of paſt Events are preſerved, and that the public *Records* are tranſmitted to us. It is by this that we come to know the Laws that have been formerly enacted, the Conſtitutions of States, the various Revolutions of Kingdoms and Empires, the Lives and Actions of great Men, the Sayings, the Doctrines, and the

Sentiments of the Wiſe and Learned; and by this we have the Accounts of many *extraordinary* Events, *uncommon* Facts, that have happened from Time to Time, and which are received by the moſt knowing and judicious Perſons, without Scruple, on the Credit of thoſe Accounts, when there is good Reaſon to believe them genuine. And it is then that there is the greateſt Reaſon to believe and depend upon *written* Accounts of Facts, of Doctrines, and Laws, when the Accounts were committed to *Writing*, in the very Age in which the Doctrines were delivered, or the Facts were done; and by Perſons that were *Witneſſes* to thoſe Facts, or perfectly well acquainted with them; and who at the ſame Time appear to have been Perſons of great Fidelity and Sincerity; who, we have all the Reaſon in the World to think, had no Intention to impoſe upon others, nor Intereſt in doing ſo; eſpecially if *the Writings themſelves* have all the Characters of Truth, Simplicity, and Integrity that can be deſired, and have nothing in them that can give any reaſonable Suſpicion of Fraud.

Now to apply all this to the Caſe before us. It is highly reaſonable to think that, ſuppoſing *God to have ſent his Son to ſave and to redeem Mankind, and to bring a Revelation from*

from Heaven, exhibiting the beſt and moſt perfect Scheme of Religion that ever was publiſhed to the World, he deſigned it, not merely for the Uſe and Benefit of that Age in which theſe Things actually came to paſs, but alſo of ſucceeding Ages. We may therefore juſtly conclude from his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, that he would take Care that *the Revelation itſelf*, with it's Doctrines and Laws, and an Account of the *extraordinary* Facts by which it was atteſted and confirmed, ſhould be tranſmitted to ſucceeding Ages, in a Manner that might be ſafely depended upon; and conſequently, that he would take Care that it ſhould be tranſmitted in *written authentic Records*, this being, as was before obſerved, the ſafeſt Way of conveying the Knowledge of Doctrines or Facts that were taught or done in paſt Ages, and every Way ſufficient to lay a Foundation for a reaſonable Belief. Now this is the Method that hath been actually taken, with Regard to *the Goſpel Revelation. The original Revelation itſelf*, the Doctrines and Diſcourſes of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, and the wonderful Facts that atteſted *his Divine Miſſion*, are tranſmitted to us in *Records* that have all the Marks of Credibility and Authenticity that can be reaſonably deſired: For *they were written*, in the very Age in

which thoſe Doctrines and Laws were delivered, and thoſe Facts were done; and by Perſons who were *themſelves Witneſſes* to thoſe Facts, and perfectly acquainted with thoſe Doctrines and Laws; and who appear at the ſame Time to have been Perſons of great Integrity and undeſigning Simplicity, and who could have no Intereſts of their own to ſerve in Promoting a Religion that had nothing in it to flatter their Hopes and Views, and that was contrary to their moſt favourite Paſſions and Prejudices. Add to this that *the Writings themſelves* have remarkable internal Characters of Purity and Simplicity and of an impartial Regard to Truth, and not one Mark of the Contrary; which it is ſcarce poſſible intirely to avoid in *Writings* artfully contrived to ſerve a Purpoſe: And it carrieth the Evidence as far as it can go, when we conſider that, beſides all this, we have good Reaſon to believe that the Perſons that *wrote* thoſe Accounts were under *a Divine Guidance*, to preſerve them from Miſtake and Error, and to aſſiſt them in giving a juſt and true Account of thoſe Facts, Doctrines and Laws. If this be a true State of the Caſe with regard to *the evangelical Records*, then it appeareth that they may be ſafely depended upon; and that it is with great Juſtneſs and Propriety that

that it is here declared by the *Apoſtle and Evangeliſt St.* John (and it holdeth equally, with regard to the Accounts given us by the other *Evangeliſts*) *theſe Things are written, that ye might believe that* Jeſus *is the* Chriſt, *the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.* Where it is plainly ſignified that the original Deſign, for which theſe Accounts of our Saviour's Life, Diſcourſes, Miracles, and Reſurrection were committed to *Writing*, was, that Men might be thereby engaged to *receive and believe in* Jeſus Chriſt, in order to their Obtaining *eternal Life and Salvation through him*; and it is alſo intimated that theſe Accounts are of ſuch a Nature as to be every Way ſufficient to produce this Effect in thoſe that impartially read and conſider them.

To ſet all this in a proper Light I propoſe diſtinctly to ſhew,

Firſt, That *the evangelical Records were written* in the apoſtolical Age, that is, in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Doctrines and Laws taught and delivered, which are there *recorded.*

Secondly, That *they were written* by Perſons who were themſelves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully aſſured of the Truth of them.

Thirdly, That *theſe Writings* have all the

internal Characters of Fairneſs and Impartially, of Pureneſs and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can poſſibly have, and which clearly ſhew that *the Writers of them* were Perſons of the greateſt Sincerity, and had nothing but Truth in View.

Fourthly, That the Character and Diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, as repreſented in *the evangelical Writings*, carry the plain Evidences of their own Genuineneſs and Divinity, and are of ſuch a Nature, that there is great Reaſon to think that *the Writers* of thoſe Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been diſpoſed to do ſo.

Fifthly, That which giveth a mighty Weight to all this is, that we have good Reaſon to believe, that *thoſe Writers* were under *a Divine Guidance*, ſo as to be be kept from Erring in the Accounts they give.

Sixthly, It is no ſmall Confirmation of the Truth of *the evangelical Records*, that it was upon the Credit of the Facts, that are there related concerning our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, that great Numbers, both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were brought to embrace the Religion of *Jeſus*, even in the firſt Age, when there was the beſt Opportunity of knowing the Truth of thoſe Facts; and that in Oppoſition to their moſt inveterate Preju-

Prejudices, and when by Embracing it they expoſed themſelves to the moſt grievous Perſecutions and Sufferings.

To all this it may be added that we have all the Evidence that can be reaſonably deſired to ſatisfy us, that *theſe ſacred Writings* are tranſmitted ſafe and uncorrupted to us.

Firſt, *The evangelical Records were written* in the apoſtolical Age, that is, in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered, which are there *recorded*.

The beſt Evidence that can be reaſonably deſired to ſhew that *any Books were written* at the Time in which they have been ſaid *to be written* is, when they can be clearly traced up by unqueſtionable Evidence to the very Age in which they are ſaid *to have been written*, and can be proved to have been ſtill in Being, and when *the Books themſelves* do alſo carry plain Marks and Characters of *being written* in that Age, and not the leaſt Mark of the Contrary. And this is certainly the Caſe, with regard to the *evangelical Records: Thoſe Books*, which are now univerſally received by all *Chriſtians* as *the Writings of the Evangeliſts*, may be clearly traced, through every Age from that in which we live, up to the Times of *the Apoſtles*. In every Age from that Time to this, we have unqueſtio-

nable Proofs of their having been ſtill extant, and that *their Authority* was acknowledged among *Chriſtians*. There are ſtill remaining Numbers of *Books and Writings* of various Sorts *written* by Perſons of different Nations and Parties, who lived in the ſeveral Ages between this and the apoſtolical Times, in which there are frequent References to *the Goſpels and other ſacred Books of the New Teſtament*; they have been conſtantly appealed to for deciding Controverſies among *Chriſtians*; many Paſſages have been quoted out of them, in every Age, the ſame that are now to be found in them; Diſcourſes have been made and Commentaries *written* upon them by many different Authors who have preſerved large Portions of them in their *Writings*, and innumerable Copies of them have been ſpread abroad, and tranſlated into different Languages. Theſe are Matters of Fact which no Man can be ſo hardy as to deny: And by this Kind of Evidence, the ſtrongeſt and moſt convincing that the Nature of the Caſe can poſſibly admit of, they can be proved to have been ſtill in Being, till we come to the Age immediately ſucceeding that of the *Apoſtles*. As to the apoſtolical Age itſelf, there are but few of the Writings of that Age tranſmitted to our Time, and in thoſe few

few there are plain References *to the ſacred Writings of the New Teſtament*, and to the Doctrines and Facts *recorded* there, particularly in *the Goſpels*. But there are many Books ſtill in our Hands, which were *written* by Authors who unqueſtionably lived in the ſecond Century after our Saviour, in which theſe Writings are frequently referred and appealed to as *of Divine Authority*, and many Quotations are drawn out of them, by which it is manifeſt, that they were then received with great Veneration by the *Chriſtian* Churches, which, even in that Age, were become very numerous; and it appeareth by an Apology ſtill extant, which was addreſſed, in that Age, to the *Roman* Emperor *Antoninus Pius* on the Behalf of the *Chriſtians*, that it was then the ordinary Practice to read *the Goſpels*, together with *the Writings of the Prophets*, in their religious Aſſemblies. This Apology was written about an hundred Years after the Death of our Saviour by *Juſtin Martyr*, who, of an *Heathen* Philoſopher, became a *Chriſtian*. And, ſince *theſe ſacred Writings* were ſo generally ſpread, which muſt neceſſarily have taken up ſome Time, and were had in ſuch great Eſteem and Veneration among *Chriſtians*, even in the Age next following that of *the Apoſtles*, this plainly ſheweth that *they*

muſt

muſt have been written in the apoſtolical Age itſelf, and that they were regarded as *authentic*, and as containing a juſt Account of the Words and Actions of our Saviour. Accordingly *Euſebius*, ſpeaking of ſome eminent Perſons that held the firſt Rank in the Succeſſion of *the Apoſtles*, who ſcattered abroad the ſalutary Seeds of *the Kingdom of Heaven* all over the World, and, travelling abroad, performed the Work of *Evangeliſts*, informs us that, wherever they went preaching among the Nations, they delivered *the Scripture of the Divine Goſpel, i. e.* they carried *thoſe ſacred Writings* along with them, and put them into the Hands of the *Chriſtian* Converts. And indeed *the Writings themſelves* bear the evident Characters of the apoſtolical Age, and not one Mark of a later Date. If *the Writings of the New Teſtament had been written* in any ſucceeding Age, there is great Reaſon to think that, in ſeveral Things, they would have been different from what they now are. It could ſcarce have been avoided, but that, in ſome Parts of *thoſe Writings*, there would have been ſome Reference or Alluſion to Cuſtoms, Rites, Queſtions, or Controverſies, which had not their Riſe till after the Times of the Apoſtles; whereas there is now nothing that in the leaſt looketh that Way. All Things breathe the Purity

rity and Simplicity of the firſt Age; and the Idea, that is given of the *Chriſtian* Church *in the Books of the New Teſtament*, hath the peculiar Characters of that Age, from which there were ſome Variations, even in the Age which immediately followed.

With regard to *the Goſpel of St.* John, it appeareth from *the Book itſelf, that it was written by the Diſciple whom* Jeſus *loved, and* who himſelf *ſaw and heard* what he relateth. And it is univerſally agreed, that *the other Goſpels were written* earlier than that of St. *John*; and that the principal Deſign of it was to *record* ſeveral Things which were not diſtinctly taken Notice of by the other *Evangeliſts*. And this may be fairly concluded from the Matter of that *Book*, in which, though the Facts are plainly ſuppoſed that are related by the other *Evangeliſts*, yet *thoſe Miracles and Diſcourſes* of our Saviour are principally inſiſted upon which either were omitted by the others, or but ſlightly mentioned. If we compare the Beginning of St *Luke*'s Goſpel, Chap. i. 3, 4, with the Beginning of *the Acts of the Apoſtles* Chap. i. 1, 2, as it is manifeſt that *both were written* by the ſame Author, ſo alſo that he had *wrote his Goſpel*, before he *wrote the Acts*: And yet it plainly appeareth, that the Book of the

the *Acts of the Apoſtles was written* in the apoſtolical Age, and ſome Time before the Death of St. *Paul*: For it is evident from the Accounts given in that *Book* that *the Writer* of it was a Companion of St. *Paul* in his Labours and Travels, and particularly that he was with him in his Voyage to *Rome*, after his having been ſeized and accuſed by the *Jews*, with an Account of which, and of St. *Paul's Preaching there two Years in his own hired Houſe*, the *Book* ends. It taketh no Notice of his after Travels, or of his ſecond Impriſonment at *Rome*, and his Martyrdom there, which it would undoubtedly have done, as well as it doth of the Martyrdom of St. *James*, if *it had been written*, after theſe Events had happened. And it is a great Proof of the high Veneration the firſt *Chriſtians* had for *theſe Writings* that none of them ever pretended to make Additions to this *Book*, either with regard to St. *Paul*, or to any other of the Apoſtles. We may juſtly conclude then that St. *Luke's Goſpel*, which, *was written* before *the Acts*, *muſt have been written* early in the apoſtolical Age. And that of St. *Matthew* hath been generally acknowledged to have been written before his; and, according to the moſt probable Accounts, about

about the eighth Year after the Death of our Saviour.

It is no inconſiderable Argument to ſhew, that *the evangelical Records were written* in the apoſtolical Age, that, though *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, all give a diſtinct Account of our Lord's Predictions concerning the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the Deſolation of the *Jewiſh* Nation, yet not one of them, or of any of *the other ſacred Writers of the New Teſtament*, ever give the leaſt Hint of the Accompliſhment of thoſe Predictions, or of the exemplary Vengeance that was inflicted upon the unbelieving *Jews*, though it was a Thing ſo much to the Honour of *Chriſtianity*, and which mightily tended to the Confirmation of it, and was particularly of great Importance in that early Controverſy concerning the Obligation of the *Moſaical* Law and Ceremonies upon *the Diſciples of* Jeſus. This ſheweth that *they were written* before that great Event, which yet came to paſs within forty Years after our Lord's Crucifixion. It is true St. *John* taketh no Notice of it in *his Goſpel*, though it is generally believed *to have been written* after that Event; but this may be eaſily accounted for, becauſe he taketh no Notice of the Prediction itſelf, which had been fully *recorded* by all the other *Evangeliſts*, and was therefore

therefore omitted by him, and conſequently he had no Occaſion to take Notice of it's Accompliſhment.

Theſe ſeveral Conſiderations plainly lead us to conclude, with all the Evidence that can be deſired in ſuch a Caſe, that *the Books of the Evangeliſts were written* in the apoſtolical Age: Nor do I find that the bittereſt Enemies of *Chriſtianity*, in the earlieſt Ages, ever denied this. *Celſus*, a Man of great Acuteneſs, and a virulent Oppoſer of the *Chriſtian* Religion, who lived in the ſecond Century, at the ſame Time that he endeavours to expoſe thoſe Accounts, yet all along ſuppoſeth them *to have been written* by *Chriſt*'s own Diſciples and Attendants: And *Julian* the Apoſtate, whoſe Wit and Learning, as well as Enmity to *Chriſtianity*, is well known, when he chargeth the *Chriſtians* with not continuing in the Things delivered to them by the Apoſtles, makes particular Mention, not only of the Apoſtle *Paul*, but of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*; which ſhews, that he did not deny them to be *the Writers* of the *Books* aſcribed to them, and that he looked upon *thoſe Books to have been written* in the apoſtolical Times; and, if they *were written* in thoſe Times, they *were written* in the Age in which the Facts there *recorded* were ſaid to have

have been done. And the Facts themſelves were of ſuch a Nature, reported to have been done publicly, and attended with ſuch Circumſtances, that, if the Accounts given of them by *the Evangeliſts* had been falſe, they muſt have been immediately detected, eſpecially conſidering the Number and Power of their Enemies, who would have eagerly laid hold of any Advantages of expoſing and confounding them: But theſe Things I may have Occaſion to conſider more fully afterwards.

At preſent I would conclude with obſerving, that it is a very ſignal Advantage that, though we did not live in the Time of *our Saviour and his Apoſtles*, yet we have an *authentic* Account of the Religion which they taught, and of the Evidences whereby it was confirmed, plainly ſet before us in *Books that were written* in that Age; which Books are now in our Hands, and bear the illuſtrious Characters of uncorrupted Truth, Righteouſneſs, and Purity. And, if we ſo believe the Accounts given us in *thoſe ſacred Writings* as to *receive* Chriſt's *heavenly Doctrines into our Hearts*, and to govern ourſelves by his holy and excellent Laws, they will be as available to our *eternal Salvation*, as if we had actually lived in that Age; and we ſhall be intitled to *the Bleſſedneſs* which our Saviour

Saviour ſpeaks of in thoſe remarkable Words of his to *Thomas*, of which we have an Account in the Verſes preceding the Text: Thomas, *becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believed: Bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, and yet have believed.*



On the Credibility and Proofs of the Goſpel-Records.

DISCOURSE XX.

JOHN XX. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jeſus *in the Preſence of his Diſciples, which are not written in this Book. But theſe are written, that ye might believe that* Jeſus *is the* Chriſt, *the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.*

THESE remarkable Words of *the Apoſtle* John are intended to ſhew the excellent Deſign for which *the evangelical Records were written*, and the happy and ſalutary Effects they have a Tendency to produce, where they are ſincerely believed and embraced. It is therefore undeniably of great Importance to us to get

our Minds eſtabliſhed in a well-grounded Perſuaſion of the Truth and Certainty of the Accounts that are there given us concerning our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, eſpecially ſince we live in an Age in which the Credit of our holy Religion, and the original *Records* of it, is ſo boldly ſtruck at. Accordingly, in my former Diſcourſe on theſe Words, after offering ſome general Conſiderations to prepare our Way, it was ſhewn, That we have all the Evidence that can reaſonably be deſired to ſatisfy us, that *the Books of the Evangeliſts were written* in the apoſtolical Age, *i. e.* in the Age in which the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered, which are there *recorded*.

I now proceed to the Second Thing I propoſed to ſhew, which was, That *theſe Books were written* by Perſons who were themſelves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully aſſured of the Truth of them. Two of the Evangeliſts, *Matthew* and *John*, were *Chriſt's Apoſtles*, who were his ſpecial Intimates, and conſtantly attended him in his perſonal Miniſtry, and *ſaw and converſed with him*, after his Reſurrection. The other two, *Mark* and *Luke*, are probably ſuppoſed to have been of the Number of *the Seventy Diſciples*, as ſome *Eccleſiaſtical Writers* inform us; in

in which Caſe they alſo were among thoſe that attended our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; but, whether they were of *the Seventy Diſciples*, or not, they were certainly Companions of *the Apoſtles*, and *had a perfect Underſtanding of all Things from the very firſt*, as St. *Luke* ſpeaks. *The Apoſtles* might juſtly declare, as St. *John* expreſſeth it, *That which was from the Beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our Eyes, which we have looked upon, which our Hands have handled of the Word of Life — that which we have ſeen and heard declare we unto you.* 1 John i. 1, 3. The Inſtructions and Diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, of which they give an Account, were what they *heard* him deliver; and the wonderful Works they relate, as done by him, were what they themſelves *ſaw*. And theſe Works were not merely a few extraordinary Facts done now and then, but a Series of Facts done for a conſiderable Time together, all tending to the ſame End, and giving Weight and Force to one another: They were Facts obvious to all their Senſes, and which they had a full Opportunity of knowing and examining in all their Circumſtances. And they had the ſame Reaſon to be aſſured, that Chriſt *roſe again from the Dead*, as that he had lived

and taught among them, and *had done many wonderful Works*, and that *he was* at length *crucified and ſlain*, *viz.* the concurring Teſtimony of all their Senſes; their *Seeing*, *Hearing*, *Feeling*, *Converſing*, *Eating*, and *Drinking* with him, after his Reſurrection. And therefore St. *Luke*'s Manner of expreſſing himſelf on this Occaſion is very juſt and well founded, *viz.* that *he*, Jeſus, *ſhewed himſelf to them alive, after his Paſſion, by many infallible Proofs, being ſeen of them forty Days, and ſpeaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.* Acts i. 3. And it was an additional mighty Confirmation of the Truth of his *Reſurrection and Aſcenſion into Heaven*, of which they were alſo *Witneſſes*, that they themſelves, in a few Days after his *Aſcenſion*, received the extraordinary *Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*, as he had promiſed them. It is manifeſt, therefore, that the Things related by the *Apoſtles* concerning *Jeſus*, and which *are recorded in the Goſpels*, were Things which they themſelves were fully acquainted with, and of which they had a perfect Knowledge and Aſſurance: They were Things in which they could not be deceived, and which they were as ſure of as any Man can be of what he *hears and ſees*.

And

And accordingly that they themſelves were abſolutely perſuaded of the Truth of what they relate admits of the cleareſt Evidence: No Man can impartially conſider the Accounts they give, without being ſenſible of this. They relate theſe Things plainly and circumſtantially, with an Openneſs and Simplicity, and Confidence of Truth: They all along repreſent *Chriſt*'s whole perſonal Miniſtry as a public Thing well known throughout all *Judea*; that his admirable Diſcourſes and Inſtructions were, for the moſt Part, delivered in *the Hearing of his own Diſciples, and of Multitudes of People*; and, in like Manner, his *wonderful Works* were done, not in a private and ſecret Way, but in the Preſence of great Numbers of Perſons, and even of his Enemies, thoſe that were moſt ſtrongly prejudiced againſt him. They inform us, that *he went about through the Cities and Villages, teaching and preaching the Goſpel of the Kingdom, and healing all Manner of Sickneſſes and Diſeaſes among the People*; that *Multitudes followed him from* Galilee, *and from* Judea, *and from* Jeruſalem, *and from* Idumea, *and from beyond* Jordan, *and they about* Tyre *and* Sidon; and even that *his Fame went through all* Syria, *and they brought to him, from all*

Parts, ſick Perſons that were taken with divers Diſeaſes and Torments, and he healed them all. See *Matt.* iv. 23, 24, 25. *Mark.* iii. 7, 8. vi. 5 6. They tell of his *miraculous Feeding five thouſand Men* at one Time, and *four thouſand* at another, *beſides Women and Children*; and they repreſent many of his *Miracles* as done at *Jeruſalem*, at the Times of their public Feſtivals, when there was a vaſt Concourſe of People from all Parts of the World. To relate Facts of this Kind, and as done in ſo public a Manner, that the whole Country muſt have known whether theſe Things were ſo, or not, was in Effect to appeal to *Thouſands of Witneſſes*, and plainly ſhews, that they perfectly knew the Facts were as they repreſented them, and that they were Things ſo well known, that their bittereſt Enemies, of whom there were many, could not deny them.

To this may be added, as a farther Proof that *the Apoſtles were themſelves perfectly aſſured* of the Truth of the Things they relate concerning *Jeſus*, that nothing leſs than a firm Perſuaſion of this can poſſibly account for their Adhering with ſuch inviolable Zeal and Conſtancy to him as the *Meſſiah*, after his *Crucifixion and Death*. They were without all Doubt prodigiouſly

ſhocked

ſhocked and ſcandaliſed, when they ſaw him, whom they looked upon as *the Chriſt*, treated as the vileſt of Malefactors with the utmoſt Ignominy and Contempt, *crowned with Thorns, ſcourged*, and at length *expiring upon the Croſs*. If the Matter had reſted here, and *he had not riſen again*, all their pleaſing Hopes of his *Meſſiahſhip*, and of his *Kingdom*, had been blaſted at once: Nor can it be conceived, that in that Caſe they would have concerned themſelves farther about him, any more than the *Jews* did about others of their pretended *Meſſiahs*, after they had been *put to Death*. How could it have entered into their Heads to think of Perſuading the *Jews* to acknowledge and receive one for the *Meſſiah* who had been publicly *condemned as a Deceiver and Blaſphemer by the chief Prieſts and the great Council*, for whoſe Deciſions the whole Nation had ſo great a Veneration? Much leſs could they ever have hoped to perſuade the *Gentiles* to receive *a crucified* Jew *for the Son of God, the Saviour of the World*; and to place their Truſt in him *as the Author and Giver of eternal Life*, who had himſelf been *put to an ignominious Death*. This, at firſt View, would ſeem ſo ſtrangely abſurd that, if they had not been themſelves

ſelves perſuaded, both that what they related concerning *Chriſt's Miracles and Reſurrection* was true, and that they could produce Evidences ſufficient to convince Mankind of the Truth of theſe Things, they muſt have been abſolutely out of their Senſes, (a Character which any one that reads their excellent *Writings* muſt be convinced doth by no Means belong to them) to ſuppoſe that ſuch a Scheme could poſſibly take either with *Jews* or *Gentiles*. What Hope could they poſſibly have had from *Jeſus Chriſt*, when he *was dead*, if he had not *riſen again*, as he foretold? It is evident that on that Suppoſition all their Expectations from him, as to worldly Advantages to be obtained in his *Kingdom*, were periſhed. If it was the Hope of obtaining *eternal Life through him* that was the prevailing Inducement, this very Hope is the ſtrongeſt Proof of the firm Perſuaſion they had of *the Divinity of his Miſſion*, and of the Truth of the Facts by which it is ſupported, eſpecially his *Reſurrection from the Dead*: For what Hope could they have of *eternal Life* from one who, they muſt, in that Caſe, have been ſenſible had deceived them? Or what Happineſs or Reward could they expect from God, even according to their own Notions, for

their

their publiſhing what they themſelves knew to be falſe, and deliberately carrying on a ſolemn Impoſture in his Name? And that with this Aggravation that they made it their Buſineſs to perſuade great Numbers of Perſons to expoſe themſelves to the moſt grievous Sufferings, and even *to lay down their Lives* for what they who put them upon it knew to be an Impoſture; which muſt have been ſo tranſcendent a Wickedneſs, that Perſons of ſuch excellent Characters and Diſpoſitions, as they appear from their whole Conduct to have been, cannot be ſuppoſed to have been capable of it. Upon the Whole, no Reaſon can poſſibly be aſſigned for their manifeſting ſuch an unparalelld Affection and Eſteem for *Jeſus Chriſt*, after his *Crucifixion and Death*, for their devoting themſelves and all their Labours with an unwearied Ardor to ſerve the Intereſts of his *Kingdom*, for their truſting ſo confidently in him for *Salvation*, and ſo joyfully enduring the moſt grievous Sufferings and Perſecutions *for his Sake*; for and their publiſhing a Religion *in his Name*, contrary to the moſt favourite Notions, as well to as the darling Paſſions and rooted Prejudices both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; but their being fully perſuaded of the Truth

of

of what they themſelves declared concerning *the Miracles* he performed, and the Doctrines he taught; and concerning his *Reſurrection from the Dead, and Exaltation at the right Hand of the Majeſty on high.* This fully accounteth for their Conduct, and nothing elſe can do it: It was this that was the proper Source of their admirable Self-denial, Patience, and Conſtancy. And indeed whoſoever impartially conſidereth the Whole of their Practice and Character, their eminent Piety, Humility, Simplicity, their ardent Deſire of promoting *the Glory of God* and the Happineſs and Salvation of Mankind, and the Cauſe and Intereſts of Virtue and Righteouſneſs in the World; will find the greateſt Reaſon to be convinced of their Sincerity: And, taking the ſeveral Conſiderations that have been mentioned together, it ſeems to be upon the Matter as plain, that *the Apoſtles themſelves believed* thoſe Things which they publiſhed concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, and which *are recorded in the evangelical Writings*, as it is that they endeavoured to perſuade others to *believe* them. And of this we have as good Reaſon to be aſſured as that there were ſuch Perſons as the *Apoſtles*, or that there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jeſus*, whoſe Diſciples and Attendants they

they were: And he that ſhould pretend to doubt of this would only render himſelf ridiculous: He might as reaſonably pretend to doubt that the Religion of *Jeſus* was publiſhed at all, and that there are *Chriſtians* now in the World. And, if *the Apoſtles* were themſelves convinced and perſuaded that theſe Things were true, this ſhews that they were really true, becauſe they could not but know whether theſe Things, were true, or not, ſince, as hath been obſerved, they were *Eye and Ear Witneſſes*, the conſtant Attendants of *Jeſus*; and, if they could be deceived in Things of ſuch a Nature, which they had ſo many Ways of knowing and being aſſured of, and which came to them confirmed by the Teſtimony of all their Senſes, no Man living can be certain of any Thing that he *hears or ſees*.

Thirdly, The next Thing I propoſed to ſhew was, that *the evangelical Writings* have all the internal Characters of Fairneſs and Impartiality, of Candor and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can poſſibly have, and which clearly ſhew that *the Writers of them* were Perſons of great Integrity, and had nothing but Truth in View, and that the Accounts which are there given may be ſafely depended upon. Whoſoever impartially

partially conſidereth *the Books of the Evangeliſts* will find that they every-where breathe a genuine unaffected Simplicity and Love of Truth, as well as an eminent Piety. There are not any Traces to be found of the Spirit of this World, of carnal Policy, Ambition, Avarice, or Senſuality; nothing that can give the leaſt Ground of Suſpicion, that *the Writers of them* had a Deſign to impoſe upon Mankind. No Arts are made Uſe of for prepoſſeſſing and captivating the Reader. There are no Attempts to move and engage the Paſſions, no deceitful Colourings or plauſible Digreſſions; but a plain, naked, ſimple Narration of Facts and Diſcourſes, without any Ornaments, Amplification, or Diſguiſe. And, as there are no Marks of Impoſture to be found in *theſe Writings*, ſo neither is there any Thing that diſcovereth a hot wild Enthuſiaſm. *The Evangeliſts*, relate with a calm Simplicity, *Chriſt*'s wonderful Actions and excellent Diſcourſes, without interpoſing any Reflections to beſpeak the Admiration of the Readers, or to expreſs their own: And, with the ſame Coolneſs, they take Notice of the baſe and impious Reflections caſt upon him, without ſignifying their Indignation, as was natural on ſuch Occaſions.

Occaſions. And, even when they relate his grievous Sufferings, and the cruel Indignities put upon him, there are no tragical Exclamations, no Expreſſions of Wrath and Bitterneſs againſt his Enemies and Perſecutors: They write as if they were diveſted of human Paſſions and Prejudices, and in a Way that ſhews they were under the Conduct of *a Divine Spirit, that Wiſdom which is from above, which is firſt pure, then peaceable.*

As many of *Chriſt*'s excellent Diſcourſes and Inſtructions were occaſional, ſo they are related by the *Evangeliſts* with the Circumſtances and Occurrences that gave Occaſion to them; which is no ſmall Evidence of their Genuineneſs; whereas, had his Doctrines and Inſtructions been worked up into a formal Syſtem, there would have been greater Reaſon to ſuſpect Art and Contrivance. They content themſelves with relating his Diſcourſes and divine Leſſons, as he delivered them: And, if there were any Thing in them at any Time that might ſeem *hard to be underſtood*, and apt to prejudice Perſons againſt him, they take no Pains to conceal it, nor add any Thing of their own by Way of Softening or Apology. Several Things are repreſented by them as ſpoken by our Lord, which they

they would not have mentioned, if they had been *artful Writers*, that ſtudied only to relate thoſe Things which might have a ſpecious Appearance. Thus St. *John* gives an Account of that myſtical and figurative Diſcourſe of our Lord concerning *Eating his Fleſh and Drinking his Blood*, at which, as he informs us, many of thoſe that had profeſſed to be *his Diſciples*, taking it in a groſs literal Senſe, were ſo offended that *they went back, and walked no more with him*. St. *Matthew* repreſents *Chriſt* as declaring to his *Apoſtles*, *Think not that I am come to ſend Peace on Earth: I came not to ſend Peace, but a Sword: For I am come to ſet a Man at Variance againſt his Father, and the Daughter againſt her Mother, and the Daughter-in-Law againſt her Mother-in-Law; and a Man's Foes ſhall be they of his own Houſhold.* Matt. x. 34, 35, 36. And though this, if rightly conſidered, furniſheth a Proof of his foreſeeing Mind, and that he well knew the great Progreſs that his Religion, though propagated by the moſt unlikely Inſtruments, would make in the World, as well as the violent Oppoſition that would be raiſed againſt it, notwithſtanding it's benevolent Nature and Tendency; yet, at firſt View, the Manner of Expreſſion appears

to

to be ſo harſh, and to make ſo diſadvantageous a Repreſentation of the Effects of *his Coming*, that it can ſcarce be ſuppoſed *his Diſciples* would have repreſented him as ſaying ſuch Things, if they had not fixed it as a Rule to themſelves to adhere with the greateſt Exactneſs to Truth in the Accounts they give of his Diſcourſes. In the ſame Diſcourſe he tells his *Diſciples*, that *they ſhould be hated of all Men for his Name's Sake*, Ver. 22. And elſewhere we find him declaring, *Whoſoever will come after me, let him deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs, and follow me.* Mark viii. 34. And on another Occaſion we are told, that *there went great Multitudes with him, and he turned and ſaid unto them, If any Man come to me, and hate not his Father, and Mother, and Wife, and Children, and Brethren, and Siſters, yea, and his own Life alſo,* (*i. e.* if he be not ready to forſake and abandon them, when called to it) *for my Sake, be cannot be my Diſciple.* Luke xiv. 25, 26. And immediately after he declares, *Whoſoever there be of you that forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my Diſciple.* Ver. 33. It can neither be ſuppoſed, that our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, if he had been an artful Impoſtor, would have expreſſed himſelf at this Rate; nor that *the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts*,

geliſts, if they had not been Perſons of great Honeſty and Integrity, would have repreſented him as ſpeaking in ſuch a Manner; which, in all Likelihood, inſtead of engaging Perſons to embrace his Religion, would effectually diſcourage and deter them from it. And their Adhering to him, after his making ſuch Declarations, could be only owing to their being fully convinced that he was *the Divine Perſon* he profeſſed himſelf to be, and to their Hopes of obtaining a glorious Reward in a better World for what they ſhould ſuffer for his Sake in this: And this Hope and Conviction was founded on *the Aſſurance* they had of the Truth and Certainty of thoſe Facts by which *his Divine Miſſion* was atteſted and confirmed.

If the *Evangeliſts* had not been *fair and faithful Writers*, that had an inviolable Regard to Truth, they would not have been ſo ſilent as to what *Jeſus* did in the firſt thirty Years of his Life before his Entrance on his public Miniſtry. If they had given themſelves a Liberty to indulge Fiction, it would have been much eaſier to have forged *Miracles* as done by him, when he was in a more private Way, than afterwards when he made his public Appearance, and had *Thouſands* to be *Witneſſes*

neſſes of his Actions: But, though in ſome *ſpurious Writings* of After-ages we find Relations of *wonderful Things* pretended to have been done by *Jeſus*, while he was yet a Child, nothing of this appeareth in *the Evangeliſts*, who never allowed themſelves to relate any Thing, however it might ſeem to be for his Honour, but what they were aſſured was ſtrictly true.

If they had not been determined to relate Things with the utmoſt Impartiality, they would not have mentioned the ſtrange Treatment he met with from his own Countrymen of *Nazareth*, and their contemptuous Manner of ſpeaking of him: *Is not this the Carpenter? And the Carpenter's Son?* They would not have introduced him as ſaying to one that declared his Reſolution to follow him, *Foxes have Holes, and the Birds of the Air have Neſts; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head.* Much leſs would they have mentioned the malicious Scoffs, the blaſphemous Reproaches and Calumnies that were caſt upon him, as that *he was a Wine-bibber and Glutton, a Friend to Publicans and Sinners, a* Samaritan, *a Deceiver, one that had a Devil, and was mad, and that he wrought his Miracles by the Help of* Beelzebub, *the Prince of the Devils.* Their *Re-*

cording theſe Cenſures, which, conſidering the Affection and Veneration they had for *Jeſus*, muſt have filled them with Horror, is a great Proof that they were *fair Writers*, and that they were not for concealing what his bittereſt Enemies ſaid againſt him: And, at the ſame Time, ſome of theſe Cenſures plainly ſhew, that his greateſt Enemies could not deny that *he wrought many ſignal Miracles*, which were above the Power of Man to perform, and which therefore, to hinder the Impreſſion they might make upon the People, they aſcribed to a diabolical Power.

But no-where does the Sincerity and Impartiality of *the evangelical Writers* more ſignally appear than in the Accounts they give of our Saviour's *laſt Sufferings and Death*. None of the Circumſtances attending it are concealed; not even thoſe that might ſeem moſt ignominious and reproachful. With Regard to his Behaviour on that Occaſion, they repreſent him, even in his Entering upon his *laſt Sufferings*, as *ſore amazed and very heavy*; as declaring that *his Soul was exceeding ſorrowful even unto Death*; as *in a direful Agony*; and as offering up a Prayer, which, at firſt View, might have the Appearance of his Declining thoſe Sufferings. What rendereth

dereth this more remarkable is, that *the New Teſtament Writers* repreſent *Chriſt's Apoſtles* and the primitive *Chriſtians*, after his Departure out of the World, as *rejoicing to ſuffer Shame for his Name*; as chearfully enduring the greateſt Sufferings; yea, and as *more than Conquerors*, as one of them nobly expreſſeth it, *over Tribulation, Perſecution, and Death itſelf*. Why then did they not repreſent their great Lord and Maſter, who himſelf exhorted *his Diſciples to rejoice and be exceeding glad, when perſecuted for Righteouſneſs Sake*, as *exulting* in the Midſt of Sufferings and Torments, and as uttering ſome glorious Expreſſions that ſhewed his abſolute Contempt of Death, and that he triumphed over all the Rage and Malice of his Enemies? This certainly is the Repreſentation they would have made, if they had allowed themſelves to have feigned any Thing for their Maſter's Honour; or at leaſt they would have carefully concealed every Thing that might ſeem to have a contrary Appearance. But they had nothing but Truth in View, and relate Things nakedly as they were, without endeavouring to palliate or diſguiſe them. It is obſervable, indeed, that, taking the whole Account together, there never was any Thing more

ſolemn and affecting; and that, if duly conſidered, it tendeth to raiſe in us a high Idea of our Saviour's Character; but this is not owing to any Art or Diſguiſe in the Relators, but is merely what ariſeth from the plain ſimple Narration, and from the Facts themſelves laid together, and compared with what *the Scriptures* teach us concerning the Reaſons and Ends of *Chriſt*'s Sufferings. I add, that this their Simplicity and Impartiality, in relating thoſe Things which his Enemies might be apt to turn to his Diſadvantage, deriveth a Credit to the Accounts they give of other extraordinary Circumſtances attending his *Crucifixion*, ſuch as *the Earthquake, the univerſal Darkneſs that covered the whole Land for three Hours, the Splitting of the Rock, and the Rending of the Vail of the Temple in Twain from the Top to the Bottom*. And indeed theſe were Things of ſo public a Nature, eſpecially conſidering the vaſt Concourſe of People from all Parts, who were then at *Jeruſalem* at the Feaſt of the *Paſſover*, that Thouſands muſt have eaſily detected them, in that Age, if they had been falſe; nor could they poſſibly have impoſed ſuch Facts upon the People, if they had not been known to be inconteſtably true.

It

It is a farther Proof of that impartial Regard to Truth ſo obſervable in the *Evangelical Writers*, that they relate without Diſguiſe Things which ſeem to bear hard upon the Character of *the Apoſtles*; though ſome of theſe *Writers* were *Apoſtles* themſelves, and others their great Friends and Intimates. They do not conceal it, that one of them was a *Publican*, a Character infamous among the *Jews*; that others of them were *Fiſhermen*, Perſons of a mean Condition, and of no Figure or Reputation in the World. They freely repreſent their Weakneſs of Faith, their Dulneſs of Apprehenſion, and the Power of their Prejudices, which ſometimes hindered them from underſtanding the Things that were moſt plainly told them; as alſo their Ambition and Contentions about Pre-eminence, for which they were frequently reproved by our Lord. Even with Regard to thoſe that were of the greateſt Name among them, they relate ſeveral Things very little to their Advantage, and which, if they had been guided by a partial Regard to their Reputation, they would have concealed; ſuch as the uncharitable Zeal of *James* and *John*, who were for *calling for Fire from Heaven, to conſume the* Samaritans; for which our Saviour rebuked

them, and told them *they knew not what Spirit they were of*; and the ambitious Requeſt made in their Name, that *they might ſit, the one at his right Hand, and the other at his Left, in his Kingdom.* After mentioning *Peter*'s noble Confeſſion, and the Commendation given him on that Account, they repreſent him as ſoon after taking upon him to rebuke our Lord for ſpeaking of his own approaching *Sufferings and Death*, ſaying, *Far be it from thee, Lord; this ſhall not be unto thee:* For which he received the ſevereſt Reproof from our Saviour, that he ever gave to any of his Diſciples. They alſo take Notice of the ſtrange Speech he uttered at *Chriſt's Tranſfiguration*, and obſerve, that *he knew not what he ſaid.* But, what is moſt remarkable, they give a particular Account of his ſhameful *Fall*, and *Denial* of his Lord and Maſter, notwithſtanding the great Confidence he had expreſſed. And they repreſent *all the Apoſtles in general* as contending among themſelves who ſhould be greateſt, *even the very Night in which* Jeſus *was betrayed*, and when, one would think, their Minds ſhould have been taken up with the Thoughts of his Sufferings, which he had aſſured them were at Hand. They do not conceal their *Sleeping*

ing in the Garden, when he had commanded them *to watch*; and the ſhameful Puſillanimity they ſhewed, when *they all forſook him and fled*; and their Backwardneſs to believe that *he was riſen again from the Dead*, though he himſelf had ſo expreſsly foretold it. *The Evangeliſts* were under no Neceſſity of relating theſe Things that tended ſo much to the Diſadvantage of *Chriſt*'s moſt eminent *Diſciples*, the firſt authoriſed Publiſhers of *Chriſtianity*; or of *recording* their Faults and Infirmities to ſucceeding Ages, and which they might have omitted, without loſing any of the main Facts or Diſcourſes: And ſo undoubtedly they would have done, if they had been governed by ſelfiſh Views and human Paſſions; but they were under the Guidance of a higher *Spirit*, which led them to declare the Truth without Diſguiſe. And, indeed, as moſt of theſe Things were tranſacted between *Chriſt and his Apoſtles*, and could only be known to them, or to thoſe that had their Accounts from them; ſo none of the *Chriſtians* of the ſucceeding Age, who all had the higheſt Veneration for *the Apoſtles*, would have *recorded* theſe Things, if they themſelves had not done it; which furniſheth an additional Proof, that theſe Accounts

were written in the firſt Age. It is alſo a Proof of the Sincerity of *the ſacred Writers*, and their ſtrict Regard to Truth, that whereas there was a Controverſy, which was zealouſly agitated in the apoſtolical Times between the *Jewiſh* and *Gentile Chriſtians*, concerning the Obligation of the *Moſaical* Law and Ceremonies upon *Chriſtians*, for Deciding of which an expreſs Teſtimony from our Lord *Jeſus* would undoubtedly have been of great Weight; yet there is nothing inſerted in any of his Diſcourſes clearly and expreſsly determining this Controverſy. The Reaſon is, that *the Writers* do not deliver their own Sentiments, but keep cloſe with the utmoſt Fidelity to his Diſcourſes, juſt as he delivered them, without Addition or Alteration. It was not proper or ſeaſonable for our bleſſed Lord, during his perſonal Miniſtry, to explain and declare theſe Things ſo fully and openly as *his Apoſtles* afterwards did, in his Name, and under the Direction of his Spirit. He contented himſelf with laying down Principles with admirable Wiſdom, which virtually contained theſe Things, and from which they flowed: This was all that it was proper for him then to do, and this is all that *the Evangeliſts* relate him to have done.

Several

Several other Things might be offered to ſhew the ſignal Characters of Truth and Impartiality, that are to be found in *the evangelical Records*; but theſe may ſuffice to make us ſenſible that they juſtly deſerve the higheſt Credit, and that *the Writers* of them were Perſons of great Sincerity, and far from intending to impoſe upon Mankind. And it will carry this ſtill farther, if it can be ſhewn, that the Character and Diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, as *recorded in thoſe Writings*, carry plain Evidences of their own Genuineneſs and Divinity, and are of ſuch a Nature, that there is great Reaſon to think that *the Writers* of theſe Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been diſpoſed to do ſo: And this is what we ſhall endeavour to evince in our next Diſcourſe.

On the Credibility and Proofs of the Goſpel-Records.

DISCOURSE XXI.

JOHN XX. 30, 31.

And many other Things truly did Jeſus *in the Preſence of his Diſciples, which are not written in this Book. But theſe are written, that ye might believe that* Jeſus *is the* Chriſt, *the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have Life through his Name.*

AS my Deſign in Chuſing to inſiſt upon theſe Words was to evince the Credibility and Certainty of *the Goſpel Records*, and that the Accounts there given concerning our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt* may be ſafely depended upon; ſo in the two former Diſcourſes it was ſhewn,

Firſt, That we have all the Evidence that

that can reaſonably be deſired to ſatisfy us, that *the Books of the Evangeliſts were written* in the apoſtolical Age, *i. e.* in the Age the Facts were done, and the Laws and Doctrines taught and delivered which are there *recorded.*

Secondly, That they were *written* by Perſons who were themſelves perfectly acquainted with the Things they relate, and fully aſſured of the Truth of them.

Thirdly, That *the Writings themſelves* have all the internal Characters of Fairneſs and Impartiality, and of Pureneſs and Simplicity, that *any Writings* can poſſibly have, and which clearly ſhew that *the Writers of them* were Perſons of great Integrity, and had nothing but Truth in View.

I now proceed to obſerve, Fourthly, That the Character and Diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, as *recorded in thoſe Writings*, carry plain Evidences of their own Genuineneſs and Divinity, and are of ſuch a Nature, that there is great Reaſon to think, that *the Writers* of theſe Accounts were not capable of feigning them, even if they had been diſpoſed to do ſo.

In his Character and Diſcourſes, as repreſented by *the Evangeliſts*, are united a wonderful Divine Dignity and Simplicity; the

the moſt fervent Zeal for God and Religion, and the moſt unexampled Love and Charity towards Mankind; an impartial Freedom and Boldneſs joined with a calm Wiſdom and Prudence; Greatneſs without Pride; Condeſcenſion without Meanneſs. Who can help admiring the juſt and ſublime Notions of Religion which he teacheth, the Purity of his moral Precepts, the Beauty of his Maxims, the Solidity of his Reflections! The Inſtructions he gives are ſuch as could hardly proceed but from a Mind abſolutely devoted to God, and ardently deſirous of promoting the Cauſe of Truth, Piety, and Righteouſneſs in the World. And there is an admirable Harmony between his Diſcourſes and his Actions, which tend mutually to illuſtrate each other, and both taken together, concur to form a finiſhed Character, raiſed far above what the moſt learned and eloquent Perſons have been able to form of their moſt eminent great and good Men; ſuch a Character as is every Way worthy of what *Chriſt* profeſſed himſelf to be, *the Son of God in human Fleſh*, ſent to inſtruct and to ſave Mankind: And how could *poor Fiſhermen*, if left to themſelves, have been able to draw ſo perfect a Model!

It deſerves to be remarked, that even thoſe Things in *Chriſt*'s Actions and Diſcourſes,

ſes, which, at firſt View, have a diſadvantageous Appearance, and which none would have mentioned that had ſet themſelves to feign Things for his Honour, yet, when maturely weighed and conſidered, are quite conſiſtent with the Excellency of his Character, and even tend to heighten it. Thus it particularly, with regard to the Account given us of his *laſt Sufferings*, and of his Behaviour on that Occaſion, if we take the Whole together, it exhibiteth the moſt conſummate Pattern of Patience and Fortitude, Love to God and Charity towards Mankind. There is indeed nothing in it of Fierceneſs of Temper, not a haughty and vainglorious Contempt of Death, not an Affectation of Fearleſſneſs and Inſenſibility under Sufferings. It is very far from what the *Stoics* would have drawn for their *wiſe Men* in a ſuffering State; and yet, if cloſely examined, diſcovereth a far more excellent Temper: For here may be obſerved a wonderful Conjunction of Things, which to the moſt of Mankind might appear inconſiſtent, but which in Reality form the moſt perfect Character; a quick Senſibility of Sufferings, and the moſt ſteady Patience and Conſtancy under them; a true Greatneſs of Soul, mixed with a remarkable Tenderneſs of Heart. *Chriſt*'s Behaviour under his Sufferings hath

not

not a flashy showy Appearance; but there is a real solid Greatness and Solemnity in it, such as became a Person of his Dignity, when undergoing the most grievous Sufferings, for the Sins of Mankind. None of the ablest Orators or Philosophers ever drew such an affecting Scene, with so much Dignity and Tenderness. This could not be owing to any superior Art in *the Evangelists*, for they are plainly destitute of all Art; but to the extraordinary Nature of the Things they relate, and to their keeping close to Truth, and representing the Facts as they really were.

What particular Characters may be observed in *Christ*'s Farewel Discourses to *his Disciples! John* xiv. 15, 16. And in his Prayer to his *heavenly Father!* John xvii. 17. What an inimitable Grandeur and Simplicity, what Love to his *heavenly Father*, what an intire Devotedness to his Will, what Purity and Sanctity of Mind, what an amiable Concern and Tenderness of Affection towards *his Disciples*, impossible to be counterfeited! The like Observations may be made upon many other of his Discourses, as *recorded in the Gospels*, which in a narrow Compass contain a vast Variety of the most admirable Instructions, and in which there every-where breathe the most perfect Purity, Piety, and Charity;

Charity; a Divine and heavenly Temper; and the moſt earneſt and affectionate Concern for the *Salvation of Mankind.* They have ſerved as a Foundation for numberleſs excellent Books that have been ſince publiſhed among *Chriſtians*, and which, though many of them *written* by Perſons of great Parts and Learning, yet fall greatly ſhort of the noble Simplicity, the Gravity, the Divine Force and Dignity, that are to be obſerved in our Saviour's Diſcourſes, as related in *the Evangelical Writings.*

It hath been not unreaſonably ſuſpected, that *Plato* and *Xenophon*, who were Perſons of great Ability and Eloquence, have frequently put their own Words and Sentiments into the Mouth of their Maſter *Socrates*, whilſt they have profeſſed to give an Account of his Diſcourſes: But, in the Caſe of *the Evangeliſts*, there is no Room for a Suſpicion of this Kind. *Matthew*, one of them, had been a *Publican*; and the others were, for the moſt Part, *Fiſhermen*, Perſons of mean Education, and who had ſmall Advantages of Improvement. We may therefore ſafely ſay, that it was a Thing they were not capable of, to have feigned ſuch excellent Diſcourſes, in which there is ſo much profound Wiſdom, and ſuch juſt and ſublime Sentiments of Religion, delivered

livered with ſo much Gravity and Authority, and yet in a plain familiar Way; Morals ſo pure and refined, and of ſo noble an Extent, far tranſcending any Thing that the moſt celebrated Doctors among the *Jews* then taught. If we could ſuppoſe ſuch Perſons as *the Apoſtles* capable of forming a Scheme o Religion, it would certainly not have bee ſuch as the *Chriſtian* is; in which there are none of thoſe favourite Notions and Prejudices which then univerſally poſſeſſed the Minds of the *Jews*, both of the Learned and of the Vulgar; no Regard to *the Traditions of the Elders*; no Allowance for thoſe frequent *Divorces* which had been ſo cuſtomary among them; no pleaſing Expectations of a *Meſſiah* that ſhould raiſe their Notions to great ſecular Glory and univerſal Dominion. They could certainly never have thought of the *Gentiles* being incorporated into one Church and Body with the *Jews*, and admitted to equal Privileges with the ancient *People of God*: They could never have contrived ſuch a wiſe and admirable Scheme of Religion, which, at the ſame Time that it ſet aſide the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation, really bore a wonderful Harmony and Correſpondence to it, and fulfilled the true Intention of *the Law and the Prophets*, in the nobleſt Senſe; a Religion pure and holy to the higheſt De-

gree, yet free from Extremes, and from the affected Superſtitions and Strictneſſes of the *Phariſees* and *Eſſenes*. All this is ſo different from what might have been expected from ſuch Perſons as *the Apoſtles*, if left to themſelves, that it is but reaſonable to believe, what they conſtantly declare, that they received their Inſtructions from *Jeſus, a Divine Teacher*. They never take the Glory of this Scheme of Religion to themſelves, or pretend to an higher Character than that of *his Diſciples, and to teach thoſe Things which he commanded them*: Nor would they have received theſe Things from him, ſo contrary to all their Expectations, Views, and Prejudices, if they had not been fully perſuaded that he was the extraordinary Perſon he declared himſelf to be, and that what they relate of him was really true. S*t. Paul*, who was the moſt learned and knowing of *all the Apoſtles*, was ſo far from having invented the *Chriſtian* Scheme, that he could never have been brought to embrace it, if he had not been overcome by an almoſt irreſiſtable Evidence, in Oppoſition to all his former Notions and Prejudices: And he conſtantly ſpeaketh in the moſt diminiſhing Terms of himſelf, and declareth, that *he had the Doctrine*, which he taught and publiſhed to the World,

World, *not of Man, or by Man, but by the Revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt.

Fifthly, That which giveth a mighty Weight to all that hath been ſaid, and which raiſeth the Credit of *the evangelical Writings* as high as it can go, is, that *the Writers of them* were under *a Divine unerring Guidance*. As there is great Reaſon to believe that, ſuppoſing *God to have ſent his Son into the World* for ſuch important Purpoſes, and to have confirmed *his Divine Miſſion* by ſuch illuſtrious Atteſtations, he would take Care that the Accounts both of the Inſtructions he delivered, and of the extraordinary Atteſtations given him, ſhould be tranſmitted *in Writing* to ſucceeding Ages; ſo it is but juſt to conclude, that he would order it ſo that *thoſe Writings* might be intirely depended upon for an exact and unerring Account both of Doctrines and Facts. This may be fairly concluded from the the Uniformity of the Divine Proceedings, ſince otherwiſe he would leave his own glorious Work imperfect. *The Apoſtles*, the firſt authoriſed Publiſhers of *Chriſtianity*, were aſſiſted in an extraordinary Manner *in Delivering the Things which they received from the Lord, God bearing them Witneſs with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*; ſo that thoſe to

whom they preached were obliged to *receive the Word they delivered, not as the Word of Men, but as in Truth the Word of God.* 1 Theſſ. ii. 13. And, if they were thus aſſiſted in publiſhing *the Goſpel by Word of Mouth*, the Reaſon holdeth ſtill more ſtrongly for their being ſo aſſiſted as to be kept from Error and Miſtake in committing thoſe Doctrines and Facts to *Writing* for the Inſtruction and Direction of all ſucceeding Ages. It was the expreſs Promiſe of our Lord to *his Diſciples*, John xiv. 26, *The Comforter which is the Holy Ghoſt, whom the Father will ſend in my Name, he ſhall teach you all Things, and bring all Things to your Remembrance, whatſoever I have ſaid unto you.* Where it is plainly implied, that *they ſhould be divinely aſſiſted*, in remembering and relating *Chriſt*'s Actions and Diſcourſes. Two of the *Evangeliſts* were *Apoſtles*, to whom this Promiſe was immediately made; and the two others were conſtant Attendants and Companions of *the Apoſtles*, who *wrote what they received from them*, and were themſelves endued with *the extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit*, and, as St. *Luke* expreſly declareth, *had perfect Underſtanding* of thoſe Things which they relate. It confirmeth this, when we conſider the wonderful Harmony which may be obſerved in the

the four *Goſpels*, though *written* by different Perſons, and at different Times. The ſmall Variations that ſometimes appear in the Accounts they give, all which admit of a fair Reconcilement, only to ſerve to make their Concord the more remarkable, and ſet it in a ſtronger Light: They all admirably agree in the Facts and Sentiments, and all have the ſame remarkable Characters of Dignity and Simplicity; of Purity, Sincerity, and an impartial Regard to Truth; which ſhews that *they were all written* under the Conduct of *the ſame Spirit*. It was becauſe this was well known, that the *Writings of the Evangeliſts* were, immediately from their firſt Publication, received without Contradiction by the whole *Chriſtian* Church; whereas, though there were other Accounts that were then publiſhed of theſe Things, as is manifeſt from *Luke* i. 1, they were not generally acknowledged among *Chriſtians*, as not being ſo authentic, and probably having a Mixture of Things that were not to be depended upon. And, whatever Clamour hath been raiſed about ſome *ſpurious Goſpels* which afterwards appeared, there is nothing capable of a clearer Proof than that theſe four *Goſpels*, and theſe only, were univerſally received as of *Divine Authority* in the *Chriſtian* Church, in the Ages

neareſt *the Apoſtles*; and have continued to be ſo ever ſince, and have been all along regarded with the greateſt Veneration.

To this it may be added, that there is a perfect Agreement between *the evangelical Writings* and the other *ſacred Books of the New Teſtament*, all which *were written*, though by different Perſons, in the apoſtolical Age. The ſame important Facts are every-where ſuppoſed, the ſame Scheme of Religion is uniformly carried on, the ſame Doctrines taught, and Precepts injoined. The Miracles there referred to as done by *the Apoſtles* in the Name of *Chriſt* after his Aſcenſion, and *the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt*, that were poured forth upon them, were all in Purſuance of, and give a farther Confirmation of, the Facts related in *the Books of the Evangeliſts*, and were indeed a remarkable Completion of the Promiſes and Predictions of our bleſſed Lord as there *recorded*. See to this Purpoſe *John* vii. 38, 39. xiv. 12, 26. xvi. 13, 14. *Mark* xvi. 17, 18. *Luke* xxiv. 49.

Beſides all that hath been offered, it may be farther obſerved,

Sixthly, That it is no ſmall Confirmation of the Truth of the *evangelical Records*, that it was upon

upon the Credit of the Facts which are there related concerning *Jeſus Chriſt* that great Numbers both of *Jews and Gentiles* were brought to embrace the Religion of *Jeſus*, even in the very firſt Age, when there was the beſt Opportunity of knowing the Truth of thoſe Facts; and that in Oppoſition to their moſt inveterate Prejudices, and when by embracing it they expoſed themſelves to the bittereſt Perſecutions and Sufferings. As it is a Matter of Fact, which the moſt obſtinate Infidel will not deny, that there was ſuch a Perſon as *Jeſus Chriſt* who appeared in *Judea* in the Reign of *Tiberius*, as *a Teacher ſent from God*, and who was at length put to a cruel and ignominious Death by the *Jews*, or by the *Romans* at their Inſtigation; ſo it is no leſs certain, that, notwithſtanding he was *crucified*, and therefore the moſt unlikely Perſon in the World to be regarded as the *Meſſiah, the Son of God, and the Saviour of Mankind*, yet there were great Numbers both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* who, in that very Age, believed in him as ſuch, and adhered with an inviolable Conſtancy to the Religion publiſhed in his Name. It is alſo undeniable, that this Religion had nothing in it to flatter the Vices and Paſſions of Men, and was quite contrary to the prevailing Notions and Prejudices both of *Jews*

and *Heathens*: That it tended intirely to ſubvert the whole Frame of the *Pagan* Superſtition and Idolatry, which was eſtabliſhed by the Laws of the *Roman* Empire, and wrought into their civil Conſtitution, and upon which they believed the Fortunes and Proſperity of their Empire depended: That it alſo tended to ſubvert the pleaſing Schemes the *Jews* had formed, and with which they were infinitely delighted, concerning the temporal Grandeur and Glory of the *Meſſiah*'s Kingdom, and to deprive them, as they thought, of their moſt diſtinguiſhing and boaſted Privileges: And accordingly it is certain that both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, however differing in other Things, joined in endeavouring to cruſh this Religion, and in perſecuting the Profeſſors of it. It is alſo a Fact that will not be conteſted, that the firſt Propagators of this Religion were Perſons ſeemingly mean and deſpicable, that made no Oſtentation of Learning or Eloquence, and had no Wealth, Power, or Intereſt, nor any worldly Advantages to recommend them, or to engage the Attention of Mankind. If therefore they had offered no other Proof but their bare Word in Confirmation of *the Divine Authority of a crucified* Jeſus, and of the Truth of a Religion ſo oppoſite to the prevailing Inclinations and

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Prejudices both *Jews* and *Heathens*, they could have had no Expectation of being able to impoſe ſuch a Scheme as this upon Mankind. But, the Truth is, they produced the moſt convincing Proofs of *Chriſt's Divine Miſſion*: They publiſhed to the World the holy and excellent Doctrines and Laws which they had received from him, and which were every Way worthy of God: At the ſame Time they appealed to the many illuſtrious *Miracles* he had wrought during his perſonal Miniſtry, Works far tranſcending all human Power, and which were done ſo publicly in the View of *Multitudes*, that they could challenge their bittereſt Enemies to contradict them. They alſo declared, that, though he was *crucified*, he *roſe again from the Dead*, as he himſelf had foretold, and *ſhewed himſelf alive, after his Paſſion, by many infallible Proofs, of which they themſelves were Witneſſes*; and that not only his *twelve Apoſtles* frequently *ſaw* him after his Reſurrection, but that he was *ſeen of above five hundred Perſons* at once, who all concurred in giving Teſtimony to it, and were ready to *ſeal the Truth of it with their Blood*. And, as a farther Proof of his *Reſurrection and Exaltation*, they teſtified that, in a few Days after his *Aſcenſion into Heaven*, of which they were alſo *Eye-Witneſſes*, he had, accor-

according to his own Promiſe, poured forth *the Holy Spirit in his extraordinary Gifts upon his Diſciples*; and that this was done, in the moſt public Manner poſſible, on the Day of *Pentecoſt*, when Thouſands of Perſons were gathered together at *Jeruſalem* from all Parts of the then known World; who with Aſtoniſhment heard them *ſpeaking in their ſeveral Tongues the wonderful Things of God.* And of theſe *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* they continued to give undeniable Proofs, wherever they went *preaching the Word, by ſpeaking divers Kinds of Tongues, which they had never learned, and performing the moſt ſtupendous Miracles, in the Name of a crucified and riſen* Jew, and by Power *derived* from him. And, what gave a mighty Confirmation to all this, there was a great Variety of the like *extraordinary Gifts and Powers* conferred, *in the Name of* Jeſus, upon many of thoſe that by their Miniſtry embraced *the* Chriſtian *Faith.* The Evidence ariſing from all theſe Things was ſo ſtrong, and their Adverſaries were ſo little able to confute thoſe Facts, that there were great Numbers both of *Jews* and *Heathens* who, in that very Age, forſaking the Religion of their Anceſtors, and their darling Prejudices and Vices, embraced the Religion of *Jeſus*, to which they could have no poſſible Inducement

ment, but a thorough Conviction of it's Truth and Divine Original, of which they were ſo perſuaded as to perſevere in the Profeſſion of it, *even to the Death*, in the Face of the greateſt Difficulties, Perſecutions, and Dangers.

The Sum of this Part of the Argument is this, That it is utterly inconceivable that either *Jews* or *Gentiles* could have been brought to believe in one that had been *ignominiouſly crucified*, as *the Lord and Chriſt, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World*, if they had not had *a full Aſſurance* of the Truth of the Things which are related concerning *Jeſus* in the Goſpels; his illuſtrious *Miracles*, his admirable Diſcourſes, his holy and excellent Character, the Atteſtations given him *from Heaven* and eſpecially his *Reſurrection from the Dead* and conſequent *Exaltation*. It was only owing to the ſtrong and convincing Evidence given of theſe Things, in the very Age in which they were done, *God himſelf bearing Witneſs* to the firſt Publiſhers of *Chriſtianity* in the moſt extraordinary Manner, that a Religion, propagated by ſuch mean Inſtruments, deſtitute of all worldly Advantages, and which had the inveterate Prejudices and vicious Appetites of Men engaged againſt it, made ſo aſtoniſhing a Progreſs, in a few Years,

Years, though a great Part of the vaſt *Roman* Empire, then the moſt knowing and civiliſed Part of the Earth; and that in Oppoſition to all that the Powers of this World could do for ſuppreſſing it; tho' it expoſed it's Votaries to all Manner of Sufferings, Reproaches, and Perſecutions, which they endured with an unparallel'd Conſtancy, and even *with Joy*.

The ſeveral Conſiderations that have been inſiſted upon, in order to evince the Credibility and Certainty of *the evangelical Records*, when taken together, form as ſtrong an Evidence as could reaſonably be deſired in ſuch a Caſe: And, after what hath been ſaid, there needs not much be added, with regard to what I propoſed, in the laſt Place *viz.* to ſhew, that, as theſe *Writings* were originally pure and divine, ſo they are tranſmitted ſafe and uncorrupted to us. Several of the Arguments that were brought to prove that *theſe ſacred Writings* may be fairly traced up, through every Age, from our own Time to that of *the Apoſtles*, and can be ſhewn to have been ſtill extant, do alſo prove, that they have been preſerved without any material Corruption or Alteration: They have been, all along, from the Time of their being firſt publiſhed, received by *Chriſtians* with great Veneration; they were

were read in their ſacred religious Aſſemblies as *of Divine Authority*; they were ſoon tranſlated into various Languages, and diſperſed into many Hands in different Nations; numberleſs Quotations have been drawn from them, and they have been conſtantly appealed to, in every Age, in the Controverſies that have ariſen among all the different Sects and Parties of *Chriſtians*; ſo that it is manifeſt that a general Corruption of all the Copies, if any had attempted it, would have been an impoſſible Thing. And, though it cannot be denied, that there have been great Corruptions among profeſſed *Chriſtians*, yet it is evident, in Fact, that they have not altered *thoſe ſacred Writings*, in Favour of thoſe Corruptions. They have not corrupted or interpolated them, in thoſe Inſtances in which it was moſt their Intereſt to have corrupted them; and therefore it may be fairly concluded that they have not corrupted them at all. And indeed they ſtill retain all the Characters of original Purity, Truth, and Integrity, that *any Writings* can poſſibly have, as has been already obſerved; and not one Mark of the contrary: And the Religion of *Jeſus* ſtill appeareth there in it's primitive genuine Simplicity, without any of the corrupt Additions of after Ages, which may be ſtill more effectually

fectually detected and confuted from *thoſe Writings*. And, as to the various Readings which ſome have made a mighty Objection, and which, without a perpetual Miracle, are unavoidable in a great Number of Copies tranſcribed by different Perſons in different Ages, they are ſo far from inferring a general Corruption of thoſe Writings, that they furniſh a full Proof of the Contrary, and a moſt effectual Remedy againſt it, as is known to all thoſe that are acquainted with theſe Matters. We have therefore the greateſt Reaſon to conclude, that *theſe holy Books*, which we have now in our Hands, are the ſame that they were, when they came out of the Hands of *the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts*, without any Alterations of Conſequence either in the Facts or Doctrines: And therefore, by Virtue of theſe, we have an Account that may juſtly be depended upon of the Diſcourſes and Actions of our bleſſed Lord, and the admirable Scheme of Religion which he taught. Nor can we deſire a more ſatisfying Evidence, except we ſhould inſiſt upon our *ſeeing and hearing* thoſe Things in our own Perſons, in order to our believing them, which would be to inſiſt upon a manifeſt Impoſſibility, *viz.* that we ſhould be *Eye-Witneſſes* of Facts that were done ſeveral Ages before we were

were born; or at leaſt it is to demand that *all the extraordinary Things* that are related in *the Goſpels* concerning *Jeſus* ſhould be done over again for our Conviction. And at this Rate *all thoſe wonderful Facts* muſt be repeated in every Age, in every Country, and in the View of every ſingle Perſon; for one hath as much Right to demand this as another. And how extremely abſurd would this be, and unworthy of the Divine Wiſdom, I need not take any Pains to ſhew: And it were to be wiſhed, that Perſons would ſeriouſly conſider, how they will be able to juſtify themſelves to the great Governor of the World, for *refuſing and rejecting the Revelation God hath given us by his Son*, under Pretence of not having ſufficient Evidence, when it comes to us with all the Evidence that can reaſonably be deſired in ſuch a Caſe, or that the Nature of the Thing will admit of, and which they themſelves would account ſufficient in any other Caſe. I ſhall conclude this Subject with two Reflections:

Firſt, How thankful ſhould we be to God that he hath, in his wiſe and good Providence, ordered it ſo that Things of ſuch mighty Importance are tranſmitted to us in *authentic Records*, ſo that by them we ſtill have a ſure Account of the Religion of

Jeſus

Jesus in it's genuine uncorrupted Purity and Simplicity! Let us prize these sacred *Writings* as our most valuable Treasure, and make them the Subject of our frequent Meditations. Let us often consider the glorious Characters of *Divinity* that shine forth in them, the excellent Ideas there given us of God and Religion, the Purity and Holiness of the Precepts, *the exceeding great and precious Promises* which are set before us, and the Power of the Motives which are there urged to engage us to the Practice of universal Righteousness; that they have not the least Traces of a worldly Spirit and Design, nor is there any Thing in them to humour and gratify the corrupt Lusts and Appetites of Men; that the manifest Tendency of the Whole is to promote the Glory of God, and the Cause of Piety and Virtue in the World; to inspire Men with an Abhorrence of Vice and Sin, and with the Love of God and Goodness; to raise them to the most glorious Hopes, and to a Divine and heavenly Temper of Mind. The more we consider these Things, the more shall we be convinced that they had not their Original from Fraud and Imposture; that they *came from* God, and *lead to* God. Especially if we ourselves feel their happy Influence upon our own Souls, in *purifying our Hearts*, animating

mating us to the Practice of every Virtue, *comforting us in all our Tribulation*, and forming us to a godlike Diſpoſition: Then ſhall we have *the Teſtimony within us* of the Truth and Divinity of the Goſpel; our *Faith* ſhall be eſtabliſhed as upon *a Rock*; we ſhall not be *toſſed to and fro with every Wind of Doctrine*, nor be allured by the ſpecious Pretences of thoſe who *promiſe Men Liberty, whilſt they themſelves are the Servants of Corruption.*

This leads me to a ſecond Reflection upon this Subject, *viz.* That the proper Uſe we ſhould make of theſe ſacred *Writings* ſhould be to engage us to *believe that* Jeſus *is the* Chriſt, *the Son of God, that, believing, we may have Life in his Name:* For *the Evangeliſt* John here aſſureth us, that this is the End for which they were *written*: And indeed the Things there related concerning the admirable Character and Diſcourſes of our bleſſed Lord, the Inſtructions he gave, and the illuſtrious Atteſtations which confirmed *his Divine Miſſion*, taken together, form an Evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy an attentive and well-diſpoſed Mind. But let us not content ourſelves with a mere ſpeculative Aſſent, which will be of ſmall Avail to our Salvation and Happineſs: Our *Faith* muſt be a practical vital Perſuaſion, *a Faith working by*

Love, and issuing in a dutiful and sincere Obedience: For it is when we thus *believe that we have shall Life in his Name*, that is, shall obtain that *eternal Life*, *which is the Gift of God through* Jesus Christ *to all those that really believe and obey him*. And how mightily should it recommend *the Gospel* to our Affection and Esteem, that *Life and Immortality is there brought* into a clear and open *Light*, and that we are so plainly directed *in the Way that leadeth to it!* To that *eternal Life* let us continually aspire by Faith, and Love, and holy Obedience; and then we may upon good Grounds hope that, when we depart hence, *we shall be with* Christ, *and shall be made Partakers of his heavenly Glory*.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

THE END OF THE THIRD VOLUME.